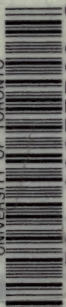


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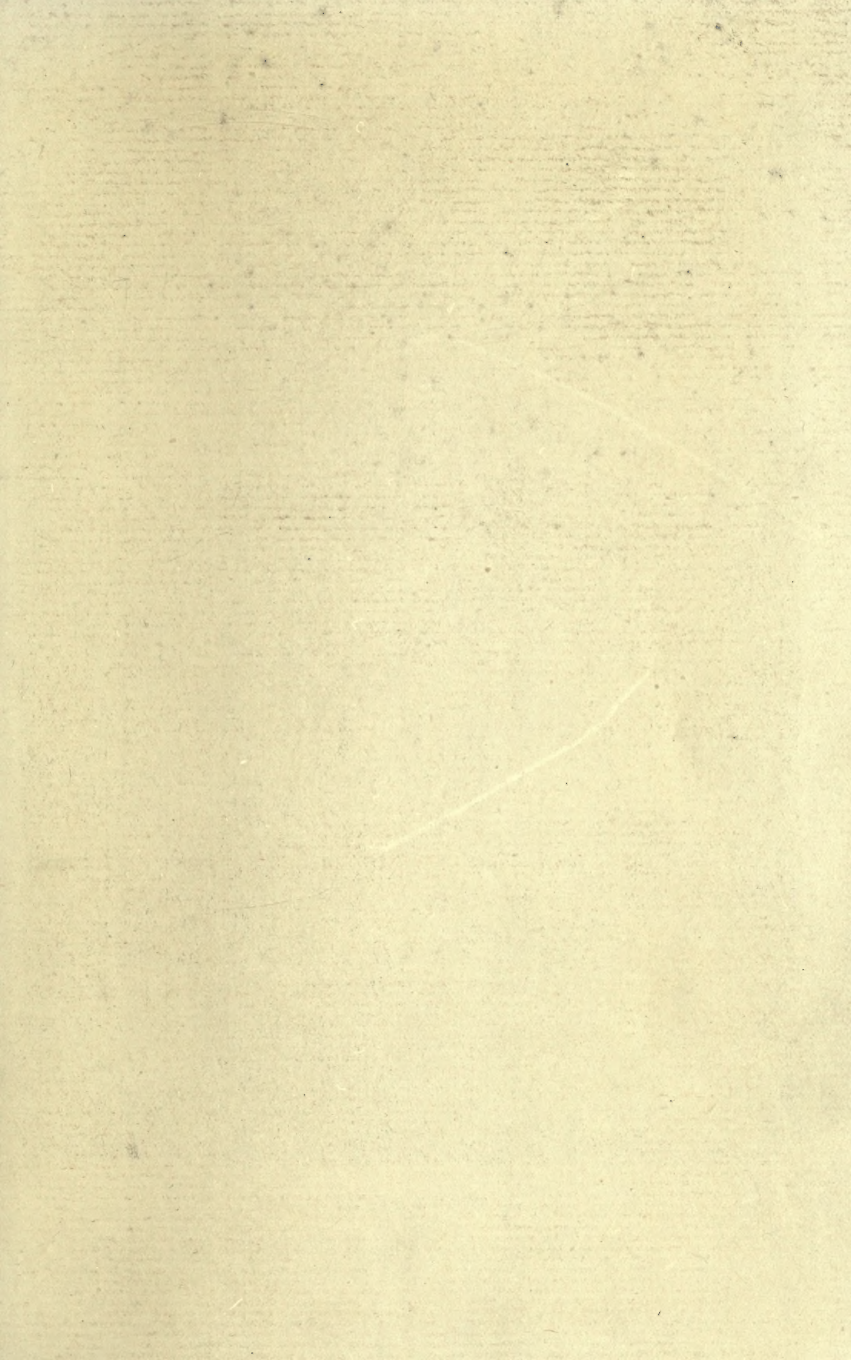
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THE HOUSE OF SMITH, ELDER





No. 15 WATERLOO PLACE
From a drawing by Phillip Norman, 1904

The House of SMITH ELDER

*"Ye forefathers of the generations and
of our families and of our kindred—unto
you the founders of our homes we utter
the gladness of our thanks"*

[by]
[Leonard Huxley]



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IT had been my husband's intention to write the history of the firm in the years of greater leisure to which he looked forward after the War. To fulfil this wish I asked his friend Doctor Leonard Huxley, who had long been associated with him, to undertake this task. The traditions, therefore, of a great publishing house for the hundred years of its existence are recorded for those who come after, when my generation, with its living memories, shall have passed away. It will be possible from these pages to realise the almost unique relations of personal friendship and loyalty which existed between the writers and their publishers—the men who controlled the destinies of the firm from 1816–1916.

This book is written for my father's grandchildren and for their children. It is especially dedicated to three little boys—

GEORGE ANTHONY MURRAY SMITH

GEORGE WILLIAM MURRAY SMITH

PEREGRINE JOHN HARRY MURRAY SMITH

I. M. S.

11 Green Street, W.

1923.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. EARLY DAYS	1
II. PUBLISHING UP TO 1843	10
III. GEORGE SMITH ENTERS THE BUSINESS	25
IV. THE BOY PUBLISHER	32
V. A BUSINESS CYCLONE—1848	40
VI. FOUR FRIENDS—(i) JOHN RUSKIN	47
VII. FOUR FRIENDS—(ii) CHARLOTTE BRONTË—WITH A FEW WORDS ON SMITH WILLIAMS	54
VIII. FOUR FRIENDS—(iii) WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY	66
IX. FOUR FRIENDS—(iv) MRS. GASKELL	73
X. PARTNERSHIP WITH H. S. KING—MARRIAGE—NEWSPAPER VENTURES	82
XI. THE PLAN OF THE <i>CORNHILL MAGAZINE</i>	89
XII. THE <i>CORNHILL MAGAZINE</i> —THACKERAY AND GEORGE ELIOT	94
XIII. THE <i>CORNHILL (continued)</i> —THACKERAY'S EDITOR- SHIP—CORNHILL DINNERS—THORNS IN THE CUSHION, HIS OWN AND HIS SUCCESSORS—ANONY- MITY	104
XIV. THE <i>CORNHILL (continued)</i> —AFTER THACKERAY	118
XV. <i>CORNHILL ARTISTS</i>	139

CHAPTER	PAGE
XVI. CONCERNING SIR ARTHUR HELPS, WILKIE COLLINS, CHARLES READE, ROBERT BROWNING, AND LADY RITCHIE	148
XVII. PUBLICATIONS, CHIEFLY OF THE MIDDLE PERIOD . . .	163
XVIII. FROM CORNHILL TO WATERLOO PLACE	177
XIX. THE "DICTIONARY OF NATIONAL BIOGRAPHY" . . .	180
XX. TWO LATER FRIENDSHIPS: MRS. HUMPHRY WARD— DR. W. H. FITCHETT	191
XXI. SOME DEFINITIVE EDITIONS AND CENTENARIES . . .	198
XXII. SIR A. CONAN DOYLE AND AN INCURSION INTO DIPLO- MACY	211
XXIII. GEORGE SMITH AND HIS SUCCESSORS	214
XXIV. PUBLISHING METHODS	223
XXV. THE <i>TIMES</i> BOOK CLUB	235
XXVI. MORE FRIENDS	239
XXVII. IN THE SERVICE OF SMITH, ELDER	245

ILLUSTRATIONS

No. 15 WATERLOO PLACE	<i>Frontispiece</i>
<i>From a drawing by Philip Norman, 1904.</i>	
CHAPTER COFFEE HOUSE	60
<i>From a drawing by Philip Norman, 1899.</i>	
No. 65 CORNHILL	178
<i>From a photograph.</i>	

The House of Smith Elder

CHAPTER I

EARLY DAYS

THE story of Smith & Elder is the story of just a hundred years, from the early times of the post-Napoleonic peace to the middle of the world war against Kaiserdom.

It is the story, in the main, of a publishing house, differing from other publishing houses in this, that for half of its existence, it was but one department of a vast business, one enterprise among the many which were directed by the same head.

The personal element enters more largely into the publishing business than into any other; and the story of Smith, Elder shows this personal element at its highest perfection in the rare felicity of the relations that sprang up between the remarkable men who guided the firm and the writers who came to them as clients and remained as their warm friends.

In the month of October 1816 a new shop was opened at 158, Fenchurch Street. It was a bookseller's and stationer's; two active young men, the one of seven and twenty, the other his junior by a year, ran the business, and on the sign, their names appeared as Smith & Elder, a title destined to grow famous in the next generation and to continue as the house of Smith, Elder & Co., East India agents, bankers and publishers, for almost 101 years, until its final transfer to other hands dating from January, 1917.

George Smith, founder of the firm, had already enjoyed experience in the book trade in Elgin, under Isaac Forsyth ; in London, under Rivington and John Murray the Second. By nature industrious, conscientious and religious, he had made his way steadily, and now feeling qualified to strike out for himself, he found a partner with a little capital and joined forces with Alexander Elder, another young Scotsman who had come to London from Banff, a man of some taste and discrimination, not only in books, but in art.

The following account of the founder of the firm and his start in life is based on some unpublished Recollections taken down from the lips of his son, also named George Smith, by Dr. Fitchett, as recorded on p. 196.

He was born in 1789, the son of a man who had a small property in Moray, or Elginshire, which he farmed himself. His father died while he was very young, and the property, managed with ill-fortune by an uncle, had vanished before the boy came of age. He was educated at the local school,* and had for schoolfellows and lifelong friends, Sir James Clark, the Queen's physician, and the eminent physician, Sir John Forbes, who was not only editor of the *British and Foreign Medical Review*, but may be said to have represented in his time the literature of his profession.

He was apprenticed to Isaac Forsyth, a bookseller in the city of Elgin, who was a man of some note in the county, and besides being a bookseller, was also a banker, in this anticipating the two-fold business which grew up under the firm of Smith & Elder.

The apprenticeship duly served, George Smith at one and twenty, like so many other youthful and energetic Scotsmen, turned his face towards London and came south to seek his

* According to the "Dictionary of National Biography," Clark attended the parish school of Cullen, Forbes the neighbouring academy at Fordyce.

fortune with the proverbial half-crown in his pocket. He found a situation at Rivingtons', the well-known publishers. The Rivington of that period was an energetic and clever man of business, but eccentric and blunt, especially towards his staff. Before long, George Smith secured a better position in the house of John Murray, with whom he got on extremely well. This was John Murray the Second, Byron's John Murray, who had moved from Fleet Street to Albemarle Street in 1814. The sturdy independence and good service of his fellow Scot won his respect and esteem.

From his stay at Albemarle Street, George Smith of Elgin carried away one vivid recollection of personal contact with the very fountain-head of romance. He was sent with a message to Lord Byron at his chambers in Piccadilly, to report the rapid sale of one of his books and ask his instructions as to a new edition. Byron was extravagantly delighted; sprang up and danced about the room. In after years, George Smith would point out the house and the very room on the ground floor where he had this strange encounter.

When sufficient experience had been gained and the time came to seek independence, the new firm of Smith & Elder started on a modest scale. Elder gave his whole time to the business; Smith, for a while, kept his position with John Murray, joining his partner in the evenings to post up the books.

For the first three years, the business kept to its original lines. Unfortunately, the first day-book of the firm has disappeared, and with it, the prayer for right conduct in the business which George Smith inscribed on the first page. While the fair-copied ledger starts on October 22, 1816, the oldest remaining day-book dates from November 11, with the entry of Messrs. Goode & Clarke for a ream of thin laid quarto paper and 200 quills; G. S. 5/-.

The regular stationer's business is attested by countless entries for pens, ink, paper and pencils—slate pencils too—bill

books, account books, policy registers, ledgers, almanacks, pocket books—sometimes with the refinement of a Russia leather case, and the re-binding of books and music.

It is more interesting to turn to the sale of books, the earliest of which, in the October ledger, include Fenélon's Works, "Pious Thoughts," "The Beauties of Sterne," Mackenzie's Works, "The Selector," Thomson's "Seasons," "Paul & Virginia." Among the most frequently bought are Blair's Sermons and Byron's Works; Burns—for Smith & Elder had a friendly Scotch *clientèle*—Sir Walter Scott's "Waterloo" and "Paul's Letters to his Kinsmen" and "Tales of my Landlord"; the *Polite Repository* and the *London Fashionable Repository*, either with a red tuck or a blue; here the *Quarterly Review*, there the *Edinburgh*, and useful books such as a treatise on Yeast. Music, too, such as Scotch music for the flute, and songs appear often in the lists. One fair vocalist buys on successive days "Love among the roses" and "Slumber not! Thy Henry's here," and a week later, "My dark-eyed maid," "Though Fate, my girl," "And has she then failed in her troth?"

The serious literary side of the shop seems to have been immediately discovered by various divines and doctors who lived near by in the precincts of the City. History preserves the name of the earliest comer among these. It was the Rev. L. Sharpe, a frequent visitor from the very first date recorded in the day-book, when he brings three volumes of music and two parts of Mant's Bible to be bound. Did he keep a school, in view of his frequent orders for pens and paper, and on December 27, of a *Gradus ad Parnassum* and a *Catullus*? And was the Mr. Watkins, of Crutched Friars, who came in the same day to have a Horace interleaved, a pupil of his?

The firm dealt in good second-hand books as well as new publications; they did a distributing business with other book-sellers, and with a pleasant linking up of old associations, became the channel for supplying books to Isaac Forsyth at Elgin.

Among the clients, also, who found Smith & Elder's a house at which to get good books, were the Banff Literary Society and the Farningham Literary and Clerical Societies.

It was not long before the selling of books suggested another field for enterprise in the making of books. Doubtless, some of their literary clients who wished to offer their opinions to the public, but feared their works would not be of sufficient importance to be taken up by the well-known publishers, had asked whether Smith & Elder would not act as publishers. At all events, it was with a book of this class that they made a start. To become a publisher in those days, membership of the Stationers' Company was necessary. Accordingly, we find both partners admitted by redemption to the freedom of the Company on March 2, 1819, and on July 19, their first publication was entered in the Register of the Stationers' Company. This was a collection of "Sermons and Expositions of Interesting Portions of Scripture," by a popular Congregational minister, Dr. John Morison, of Trevor Chapel, Brompton. "Thus unobtrusively," writes Sir Sidney Lee in his *Memoir of George Smith*, "did the publishing house set out on its road to fame and fortune, which it soon attained in moderate measure by dint of strenuous endeavour and skilful adaptation of means to ends."

Alexander Elder, with his literary tastes, was mainly responsible for the early development of the publishing department. His application to it was somewhat spasmodic, as we learn, and his ventures variable in their success, but the lists soon to be quoted show interesting results.

Three events of far-reaching importance to the firm happened in 1824-5: the birth of another George Smith,* afterwards head of the House and maker of its prosperity; the move from Fenchurch Street to the historic house, No. 65, Cornhill; and the addition of a third partner to the firm.

* His subsequent reason for signing himself George M. Smith is given in Chapter X., p. 83.

On October 12, 1820, four years after setting up the business, the first George Smith had married Elizabeth Murray, he being thirty-one and she twenty-three. Like her husband, she was of Scotch descent, her father, Alexander Murray, coming from George Smith's own county of Elgin. He had been a successful glassware manufacturer in London, but, owing to his sudden death between the destruction of his old will and the making of a new one, much of his fortune could not be traced, and his widow and children emerged from the hands of an unscrupulous lawyer with a limited income. Of Mrs. Smith, her son wrote: "My mother was a remarkable woman of quite exceptional shrewdness and strength of mind, and of extraordinary courage. She was never downcast; she carried anxieties easily. No stroke of disaster ever shook her serene courage. The relations between my mother and myself were, from my earliest memory and until she died, more than ordinarily tender and intimate. Every interest was shared with her and every plan discussed." Readers of "*Villette*" will recall Charlotte Brontë's pen-portrait of her as a woman of fifty.

From her he derived the shrewdness and sanguine temper, the lively spirit, resourcefulness and judgment which characterised him: from his father, the fundamental integrity of an old-fashioned business man, whose standard of honour was almost romantic in its quality. It was a standard attested by that first entry in his day-book which has already been mentioned: a prayer that in the transactions recorded in its pages there might be found nothing dishonourable. Nor did his acts fall short of his aspirations. Rather than evade a large part of his strict liabilities under the bankruptcy of a large Indian house, as he could legally have done by putting in certain complex counter-claims, he insisted on discharging his plain obligations in full. In this case poetic justice decreed that virtue should have more than itself for reward. When, some years later, another Indian crisis occurred, and businesses were toppling

into bankruptcy on every side, a leading house which had been interested in the previous affair, remembering his probity, offered him and his firm important facilities, saying in effect : " We know Mr. Smith to be an honest man." Apart from this fundamental integrity, he held the cardinal business virtues to be punctuality, a good handwriting, and a sober demeanour. He was a model of industry and method, but not brilliant, possessing perhaps a limited conception of the higher intellectual qualities that go to modern business—knowledge of the world, of cities and of men, the faculty for far-reaching combinations or the gift for diplomacy.

On their marriage the young couple settled down in Fenchurch Street, over the shop of Smith & Elder, and there George, the eldest son, the second of their six children, was born on March 19, 1824.

The move to Cornhill took place towards the end of the year. By an agreement dated November 21, 1824, Thomas Chambers took over 158, Fenchurch Street with fixtures at a valuation, and in return assigned to Smith & Elder the remainder of his lease of 65, Cornhill, which had been sublet to him by one Palmer. This done, Smith & Elder established themselves firmly by negotiating a new lease with the owners, the Grocers' Company, dated March 29 following. Here the firm remained forty-four years, until towards the end of 1868, George Smith, second of the name, resolved to give up the banking and Indian business, keeping, however, the publishing business, which he took over to 15, Waterloo Place. The Cornhill house, which remained in the hands of his partner, Mr. H. S. King, was rebuilt by the firm of I'Anson in 1869.

The building which now occupies the site keeps nothing of the " historic " home of Smith & Elder ; the only existing presentment of it is a wash drawing, which is reproduced at p. 178 of this volume, believed to have been made by an employee of the King firm after the separation. High up on the house

can be seen a little terracotta tablet carrying the arms of the Grocers' Company, its owners, which is now preserved in the office of H. S. King & Co.

The historic No. 65 in turn was not an old house. Little in the neighbourhood had been spared by the Great Fire of 1666, and in 1748 a fire which consumed forty-nine houses, including the house of the poet Gray, and damaged about fifteen more in Cornhill, Bishopsgate Street, and Leadenhall Street, swept away all the houses round White Lion Court, of which our No. 65 was one.

White Lion Court, within which stood the entrance to No. 65, Cornhill, lies on the north side of the street, just before it is cut by Bishopsgate Street further east. A few doors to the west of it lies another and smaller court, called Sun Court, also belonging to the Grocers.

From the middle of the fourteenth century the land belonged to the Merchant Taylors, whose Hall stands immediately behind—*i.e.*, to the north, fronting on the more or less parallel Threadneedle Street, and whose kitchen, a mediæval building which escaped the Great Fire, is close to No. 2, White Lion Court. This site, No. 2, where probably stood one of the earliest houses acquired by the Merchant Taylors, still belongs to the Company, and part is occupied by Sir H. S. King. As far back as 1522, however, the portion of the court containing 65, Cornhill, was demised to the Grocers' Company.

The name White Lion Court is of great antiquity, going back at least as far as 1434, although at the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century it bore the name of Star Court.

When Smith & Elder took over the lease, White Lion Court had one disagreeable feature. Unlike Sun Court, it had no gate to keep out intruders. At night the Court became the haunt of objectionable characters. It took an inordinate time to abate the nuisance. The tenants could not act without the

landlords, nor the landlords without the permission of the Commissioners of Lights and Pavements. By the end of 1827, however, landlords and tenants subscribed between them the necessary £18, whereupon an iron rail—for to this economical form the more imposing gate seems to have shrunk—was put up, and no more is heard of the trouble.

The move was connected with an extension of the business. It had already prospered, and now a third partner brought in new capital and soon a new branch of business. On his admission, the style of the firm was changed to Smith, Elder & Co.

To use Sir Sidney Lee's words, he was "a man of brilliant and attractive gifts, if of weak and self-indulgent temperament." In the end, his defects brought to the verge of ruin that success which his powers did so much to stimulate.

To begin with, however, his accession opened up that Indian agency which in course of time became the most important part of the firm's business. Smith & Elder had one link with India already in the custom of Peter Milne's firm at Calcutta, whom they supplied from the very first with books and stationery. But that was only part of their book and publishing business. It happened that the new partner's guardian, Æneas Mackintosh, was chief partner in a great firm of Calcutta merchants. He put business in their way, and through this connexion arose by rapid degrees a business of agency and banking which outstripped in importance the publishing business. It began with the export of books and stationery to officers in the service of the East India Company; by degrees, other commodities were dealt with: money drafts were handled and a banking business established, until finally Smith, Elder & Co. became one of the chief Indian agencies both in the extent and the variety of their transactions.

If Smith & Elder owed much to India, India in turn owes something to Smith & Elder for their aid to Lieut. Waghorn in establishing the Overland Route in the period from 1837.

CHAPTER II

PUBLISHING UP TO 1843

THE publishing business which had made its modest beginning in 1819, took its share in the steady increase of the firm's business. "The publishing branch," the Recollections tell us, "was in the hands of Elder, and it was conducted with at least spasms of energy."

One of the early publications which long enjoyed repute as a standard work was James Donnegan's "New Greek and English Dictionary," issued in conjunction with Chalmers & Collins, a Glasgow firm.

Elder's love of art was responsible for the illustrated works which not only countersigned the reputation of the house for producing finely got up books, but were among its most notable successes. They were bold ventures, for the sums involved in their production were considerable. Still, though the capital of the firm was limited, its courage was high.

"Thus an artist named Clarke was employed in 1824, at a cost of over £1,000, to make a series of drawings of the chief cities and places of interest in Scotland. These were engraved on copper and published as separate plates. This adventure proved highly successful. Of course patriotic Scotsmen supported the enterprise. It appealed to local sentiment, too; for each neighbourhood was interested in its own landscapes and historic buildings."

Thirty-five such views of the principal towns of Scotland were published in aquatint, at the price of half a guinea each. A separate publication was the "Five Views of Elgin Cathedral"—mark the persistence of Smith & Elder's earliest connections—at 2½ guineas.

By 1827 the list of similar books is swelled by Richard Thomson's "Chronicles of London Bridge," with 56 wood engravings, 28s.; the "Twenty-Four Views of Calcutta," 16 guineas; and Captain Grindlay's "Scenery, Costumes, and Architecture, chiefly on the Western Side of India," 2 guineas.

Another costly undertaking was the issue in 1835 of "Coast Scenery," a series of forty views engraved from drawings made expressly for the work by Clarkson Stanfield, R.A., and the following year issued together in book form at 32s. 6d.

This was rather coldly received by the public; nevertheless it was followed up the next year by "The Byron Gallery," containing 36 engravings from subjects in Byron's poems, at the price of 35s., again a moderate success.

In 1836, moreover, the firm brought out on Mr. Elder's account an engraving by Bacon, called "Ariel," after the portrait of Mrs. Austin, the vocalist, by E. T. Paris, which attracted a good deal of notice.

Other elaborate works which filled an imposing place in Smith, Elder's list they did not publish on their own account, but undertook as agents for firms of good repute in Edinburgh or Glasgow; such were Thomas Brown's "Fossil Conchology of Great Britain" in 28 serial parts, the first appearing in April, 1837, and Kay's "Edinburgh Portraits," 2 vols. 4to, 1838.

Most popular among the illustrated books was the Annual compounded of art, sentiment and fashion, called "Friendship's Offering," which Smith & Elder took over from a neighbouring publisher, Lupton Relfe, of 13, Cornhill, in 1827.

It had first been produced for Christmas 1824, under the editorship of Thomas Kibble Hervey, afterwards editor of the *Athenæum*. He was succeeded by the Scottish poet, Thomas Pringle, and afterwards by Leitch Ritchie, a well-known journalist and novelist of the time, who continued his association with Smith, Elder in other literary enterprises.

Smith, Elder brought out fifteen successive numbers from

1828 to 1843, inclusive. With a circulation in its palmy days of from 8,000 to 10,000, at a price of 12s., it was a profitable venture.

"Friendship's Offering," with its title sometimes briefly expanded by the addition "A Literary Album and Annual Remembrancer," sometimes reaching to the full length of "Friendship's Offering and Winter's Wreath; A Christmas and New Year's Present for MDCCCXXXVII," but always fortified by the essential dedication to a Royal Personage, belonged to "a type of literature upon which much ridicule has been expended," a type then in great favour under titles that rang the changes on Keepsakes, Annuals, Wreaths, Garlands, Bouquets, *Mélanges*.

I have before me three of these little volumes, for 1828, 1837, and 1840. They are rather dumpy little books, the first having a page of $5\frac{3}{4}$ inches by $3\frac{1}{2}$, the others slightly larger, $6\frac{1}{4} \times 4$. Each, besides possessing the indispensable Royal Dedication, bears, elegantly engraved on its title page, a motto in verse, the history of which is told in the *Recollections*.

"The firm offered a prize of 5 guineas for some lines to serve as a motto for the title page. The prize was won by a Mr. Thompson, who pursued the unpoetical trade of a seedsman in Fenchurch Street. His lines were as follows :—

This is Affection's Tribute, Friendship's Offering,
Whose silent eloquence, more rich than words,
Tells of the Giver's faith, and truth in absence,
And says—Forget me not !

And for these four lines, which were a sort of metrical anticipation of Mr. Tupper, the sum of 5 guineas was paid ! The firm may thus claim to have been the first publishers in literary history who paid for poetry a higher rate than a guinea per line ! "

The "Offering" was profusely illustrated—or to speak by the card—"embellished" with "graphic embellishments"; steel engravings, generally after pictures by well-known artists, of rustic or domestic episodes, of picturesque scenery, foreign

or English, and of feminine beauty that runs to languishing sentimentality in bandeaux and balloon sleeves.

The text consists of verse and prose, short stories, sketches, and reflections, wherein, it seems to a later criticism, the theme is nearly always better than the literary expression. Romantic adventure, sentiment, and pathos supply the usual colour.

For contributors there were writers of established reputation, ladies of quality, beginners destined to achieve fame. "The Scythian Guest" and "The Broken Chain," two long poems in the 1840 "Offering" over the initials J. R., Christ Church, Oxford, were the first that Ruskin published.*

Alfred and Frederick Tennyson appeared in company with their seniors, Coleridge and the Ettrick Shepherd and the laureate Southey, whose "Funeral Song for the Princess Charlotte of Wales" opens the 1828 volume. Macaulay contributed the "Ballad of the Armada" in 1833. Other poets who might have as many as three or four pieces in the same number, included Mrs. Hemans, Mrs. Norton, Mrs. Opie and L. E. L., Praed and Allan Cunningham, the Rev. John Moultrie (of whom Mr. Gladstone thought so highly) and the peasant poet, John Clare.

Clare of late has been lifted to better remembrance by the discovery of new work of his; but hopeless oblivion rests upon that other rustic poet, Thomas Miller (for whom Smith, Elder had published a volume of poems), though the too appreciative editor in his preface for 1837 pontificates about his merits thus :

"Among the gratifications derived by the Editor from his labours, the most enduring is the reflection that 'Friendship's Offering' was the means of rescuing from obscurity, and placing in the full eye of the world, the genius of THOMAS MILLER, the author of 'A Day in the Woods,' whose reception by the public

* Ruskin's poems were afterwards collected and forty copies printed for private circulation. One of these he gave to George M. Smith, a treasured gift for which a "fabulous price" was vainly offered.

has confirmed the estimate of his talents promulged in the volume of this work for 1836."

Among other contributors the name of Sir John Herschel must not be omitted; Agnes Strickland, Horace Smith, Barry Cornwall, G. P. R. James are still remembered, as well as Miss Mitford, whose story printed in 1828, "The Rustic Wreath—a Village Story," is, the reader notes curiously, the very tale, down to the names of the characters, that Tennyson immortalised in "Dora."

By 1843 the vogue for such books was fading. The "Offering" appeared with less than its usual complement of "embellishments," and although a reviewer, after praising the engraving of Stephanoff's Royal Group of the Queen and Prince Albert and their two children, can speak of the volume as "not a flimsy, tinselled thing, but a beautiful specimen of modern bookbinding," he describes it as the last of the original race of such books in existence. More than that, it was destined to be the last of its own line. It had no successor.

The young George Smith witnessed the issue of six of these volumes. The issue being so large—

"the actual publishing of 'Friendship's Offering,'" he writes, "was a notable event. For two or three days before the day of appearance everybody remained after the shop had closed. Tables were set out, and we sealed up each copy in a wrapper. When the work was all over we were regaled with wine and cake and sang songs."

Of a similar character was an annual entitled "The Comic Offering, or Lady's M \acute{e} lange of Literary Mirth," which Smith, Elder published for the five years 1831-5. This, illustrated in part by Robert Seymour, "the practical originator of *Pickwick*," was edited by Miss Louisa Henrietta Sheridan, a daughter of Captain W. B. Sheridan, a very distant relative of the well-known family. As George Smith enthusiastically recalled, Miss Sheridan—

“ had a full share of the grace and charm of that brilliant clan. I still remember how my boyish imagination was dazzled by her appearance in Cornhill as she walked up the shop to see Mr. Elder. I thought I had never seen so graceful a vision.”

Of the book itself he notes—

“ The humour of neither writing nor drawing would suit the taste of to-day. No John Leech nor George du Maurier existed. A picture representing a baker and a sweep proposing to a milkmaid and entitled ‘ An Offer in Black and White,’ would be a fair example of the humour of the ‘ Comic Annual.’ ”

For Miss Sheridan also Smith, Elder produced in 1838 “ The Diadem—a Book for the Boudoir,” with some valuable plates and contributions by various well-known hands, including Thomas Campbell, James and Horace Smith, and Agnes Strickland.

This was an annual in large quarto, published at a guinea and a half.

“ In an old advertisement of the book,” George Smith tells us, “ I find the following extract from a review in the *Times*, which at the present day is rather quaint reading : ‘ The thirteen embellishments are truly beautiful, and the book altogether has that degree and kind of merit which must make it the constant companion of fashionable life—missed and inquired after in every drawing-room where it is not.’ ”

In 1842 Smith, Elder produced “ The Juvenile Miscellany,” an illustrated Christmas book which is described as at once entertaining and instructive.

Later, the firm’s interest in art assumed a considerable extension from 1840 onwards, till 1847 at least. Smith, Elder undertook some part of the business of the Art Union, obtaining subscribers and distributing plates, the numbers beginning with twenty-two and reaching at their highest two hundred, amongst whom Alexander Elder figures constantly. The principle of the Art Union was that each subscriber should pay a guinea,

receiving in due course his copy of the engraving chosen for the year, such as Landseer's "Tired Huntsman" or Calcott's "Raffaelle and the Fornarina," engravings which if published in the ordinary way would cost twice as much. At the same time every subscriber ran the chance of winning one or more prizes which were drawn for. In 1840 the first prize was of the very substantial value of £75.

From 1842 Smith, Elder acted similarly as agents for the Scottish Art Union in Edinburgh, whose plates were from pictures by Scotch artists. Smith & Elder's list runs from twenty-four to eighty in number. And when the Polytechnic established in December 1842 a similar Union for the following year, Smith & Elder again acted as agents, and secured some five and twenty subscribers.

In the publication of novels the firm took their moderate share; but after a dozen years, being dissatisfied with the conventional method, they struck out on a new line, attempting "to reduce the price of works of fiction more nearly to the level of the price of other books." Novels were then published in three volumes at a guinea and a half, or, if shorter, in two volumes at proportionate rates. The ultimate cheap edition of the successful novel was the "yellowback" at two shillings. But in 1833 Smith, Elder anticipated modern developments by issuing "The Library of Romance: a highly interesting series of 15 volumes, comprising Original Tales, Novels, and Romances by the most distinguished Writers of the day. Price only six shillings per volume. Each volume complete in itself, and equal in size to THREE VOLUMES of the modern Novels. Edited by Leitch Ritchie and Thomas Roscoe."

The idea of the speculation, which was described as "one of the boldest to which the enterprise of the age had given birth," was to do for fiction what the "Family Library" and "Cabinet Cyclopædia" had done for a higher walk of literature. The "Standard Library," already in existence, was only for reprints;

this was for original work. And as the *Weekly Times* of January 6, 1833, remarked : " The names of Ritchie and Roscoe are of themselves sufficient to arrest the attention and excite the curiosity of the readers of romance."

They leave us cold to-day. " Waldemar," by the Author of " Tales of a Physician," moves us not to ask for the series. The modern novel-reader has never heard of John and Michael Banim, whose popularity as authors of " The O'Hara Family " floated the first of these volumes, " The Ghost Hunter and His Family," on seeing which the *Derbyshire Courier* remarked :

" The work is beautifully printed and neatly got up. We shall be surprised if it does not succeed. If it does not, the novel-readers deserve to be condemned, for the term of their natural lives, to continue to pay exorbitant prices for the trash of New Burlington Street (*i.e.* Colburn's)."

Fifteen volumes of the series were published. It did not succeed, and novel-buyers (more often the libraries than the readers) went on paying the guinea and a half for the three-volume format, which, as will be seen elsewhere, held special advantages for authors no less than publishers, and particularly for beginners in the art of novel-writing.

Among the authors in the series the only names we easily recognise to-day are those of Victor Hugo, a story by whom appears in a not very satisfactory paraphrase called " The Slave King," and John Galt, of " Annals of the Parish " fame. But " The Stolen Child ; a Tale of the Town," advertised as " one of the most remarkable histories of evidence ever penned," was one of his inferior productions.

The enquirer remarks that historical romance provides the basis of the majority of the series, which ends with a tale based on the conspiracy of Fiesco, " Ernesto : A Philosophical Romance," by William (Henry) Smith (1808-72), then described as author of the poem " Guidone," but who afterwards achieved

a larger fame with "Thorndale" and through the memoir of his scholarly life written by his widow.

A glance at the publication lists of 1834-6 shows that they make for breadth rather than depth, albeit the passing reviewer applauds the printing and general get-up of Smith, Elder's books. There is a fair allowance of fiction, from "Tales of Fashion and Reality, First Series," by the Misses Beauclerc, who receive the perfunctory praise allowed them as ladies of quality, to "The Governess," a tale describing the lot of this ill-treated class, which gave point to the epigram that the world consists of "men, women, and governesses."

Descriptive sketches of life at home and abroad seem popular, and in lighter vein "Alfred Crowquill's Memorandum Books" in successive years, adorned with four humorous drawings. Among these lighter forms of literature James Grant's "Random Recollections of the House of Commons" and "Random Recollections of the House of Lords" were a great success at the time, and as Sir Sidney Lee remarks, stand out as still retaining their zest for readers of a later day.

A serious contribution to literature is a translation of Goethe's "Faust," by the Hon. Robert Talbot; no less serious in aim, we may guess, is a book of "Rhymes for Young Children," asserted by a reviewer to be better than Jane and Ann Taylor's "Original Poems."

Religion, history, and travel are largely represented. One Collection of Sacred Poems, we note, is ambiguously entitled "A Voice from the Dormitory." For the most interesting name among the historians, who range from China to Brazil, from the Assassins to the United States, we turn to "The Anti-Papal Spirit which produced the Reformation," for this is by Gabriele Rossetti, Professor of Italian Literature in King's College, and father of Christina and Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

Here too we behold another mute, inglorious Milton finding voice, whom the editor of "Friendship's Offering," as already

told, was proud to have "discovered" and brought forward. But "A Day in the Woods," by Thomas Miller, Basket Maker of Southwark, and author of "Songs of the Sea Nymphs," was only typical of that kind of literature by the unlettered, often so pathetic alike in its own inadequacy and in the fleeting patronage accorded to it by an indulgent public. One reviewer treats it tenderly as a singular production, at once disarming and defying criticism, and he grants it originality and charm in its rhapsodies of nature-description as the writer imagines himself wandering with a select party through the woods. A sterner critic growls that the literary world has recently been glutted by the products of ploughboys, shoemakers, and other such aspirants to literary reputation. He seems to have foreshadowed the ultimate verdict of posterity.

Another glimpse at the lists towards the end of this period, 1842-3, shows a similar production, though still on a small scale, of verse, of religious and children's books. The old Scottish connection continues as firmly as ever, witness the "Sketch of the Geology of Moray," published in conjunction with Forsyth, and "Summer Excursions in the Neighbourhood of Banff," by a Deveronian Poet.

Along other lines there are characteristic developments. Besides the scientific Reports of exploring expeditions, of which more anon, India has its special books: an account of the great Afghan War, the Services of the 1st Madras Regiment; above all, it sees the inception of Major Fagan's "Annual Anglo-Indian Army and Navy List." This was to be brought out by subscription in January 1845.

Of high interest also to Indian mariners is Dr. Thom's "Nature of the Course of Storms," his observations on their cyclonic form suggesting the courses to be steered in order to escape from them.

Commerce at large is represented by various treatises and reports, while travel, always well represented on the list of a

firm so deeply interested in foreign lands, begins, as was natural about 1842, to concentrate on Colonial subjects and methods of colonisation, for emigration to Australasia was then to the fore, and already there is a cry for the humane treatment of the wretched creatures on convict ships. Would-be emigrants could learn much from the "Hints from the Journal of an Australian Squatter" and "A Landsman's Log-book," describing the emigrant's life at sea.

A bolder enterprise in this quarter had unfortunately met with twofold disaster. Travel books were extremely popular; why not commission travellers to go forth and produce a book for the publisher? Accordingly, about 1840, Smith, Elder sent out Austen Henry Layard and Edward Mitford on an overland journey to Asia.

George Smith records—

"They were to write an account of their travels for publication. The account was never written. For many weeks these two gentlemen were in a state of violent quarrel with one another, though what about nobody knew. After some time either Mr. Layard or Mr. Mitford, or both, conjointly, repaid our advances. In later years I frequently met Mr. Layard in society, and tried to pluck up courage enough to talk to him on the subject, and ask what the quarrel was about and why the book was never written, but never quite succeeded.

"Another enterprise, of a similar kind and with a similar ending, was an arrangement with Mr. Leitch Ritchie, afterwards editor of *Chambers' Journal*, and Mr. James Augustus St. John, who were bosom friends, to go to the South of France, and devote themselves to an historical work. But, after a very short time, *these* gentlemen quarrelled, and returned by different routes. I was intimate with Ritchie and more than once asked him what they quarrelled about. His only answer was to throw up his hands and eyes and exclaim: '*That man!*'"

The great scientific works issued about this time by Smith, Elder, where Elder's ambition to bring out important and richly illustrated books found new scope, may conveniently be grouped

in the transition period which marked the passage of the business from the original partners to the undivided control of George Smith.

Publication of these began with the first part of Sir Humphry Davy's "Works" in 1838, the year in which George Smith entered the business as a boy, and the entire series of nine volumes was completed the next year. But for the most part these publications, initiated before the change in the firm, were completed after it, thus forming a link between the two periods of publishing.

The year 1838 also saw the beginning of the first of the three great scientific reports published by Smith, Elder of exploring expeditions sent out by Government.

This was (Sir) Andrew Smith's "Illustrations of the Zoology of South Africa," towards which a Government grant of £1,500 was made. Four more volumes were brought out between 1838 and 1847, the price being no less than £18.

Of this, George Smith writes—

"The author had made an expedition for scientific purposes into the interior of Africa, accompanied by an artist named George Henry Ford, who made drawings of animals for him. These drawings had to be copied on stone for the purpose of illustrating the book, and we found it difficult to get any one of sufficient skill for the task. We had, at last, to import Mr. Ford from the Cape of Good Hope for the purpose, and he produced drawings on stone which, to this day, as representations of animal life, have, I believe, never been equalled. Ford was in many respects a remarkable man, and attained a great reputation in his own particular department of art. He was a noble fellow, one of that very rare class picturesquely described as 'nature's gentlemen,' and we came into relations of very close and warm friendship.

"He used to give us interesting accounts of the expedition in Africa, with its perils and difficulties. They often had much trouble in getting through the territories of hostile tribes. On one occasion a chief sent them a message begging them, if they

intended to come into his country, to let their beards grow. He explained that he was in want of milk-bags, and their beards would make excellent handles for the milk skins! Ford had many horrible stories to tell of the treatment of the natives by the Boers of that period."

The second of these scientific reports was by far the most interesting, for it brought Smith, Elder into personal as well as business relations with the first of their authors to achieve world-wide fame. This was Darwin's "Zoology of the Voyage of the *Beagle*," a costly work in five large quarto volumes, aided by a Government grant of £1,000. These volumes were published in succession from 1840 to 1848, at a total price of £8 18s.

From these official reports Smith, Elder also published for Darwin certain extracts in more popular form, namely, "The Structure and Distribution of Coral Reefs," in 1842, "Geological Observations on the Volcanic Islands visited during the Voyage of the *Beagle*," 1844, and "Geological Observations on South America," 1846.

Early in 1863 the correspondence shows Darwin buying up nearly all remainders of the two latter books, seventy-six and ninety-nine respectively, for five pounds. By 1876, when Victor Carus wished to translate these into German, he had given away all his copies, and the firm had disposed of all their remaining stock. Darwin thereupon arranged to have the two reprinted together under the title of "Geological Observations on the Volcanic Islands and parts of S. America visited during the Voyage of H.M.S. *Beagle*." Finding that he was correcting heavily, he begged, with his usual sense of fairness, that any excessive cost of corrections should be charged against him. This touch exemplifies one part of George Smith's remarks about Darwin:

"Of all the famous men with whom I have had relations there were very few at all comparable with Darwin in charm of

manner. Its characteristic was suavity, gentleness: a consideration for others which was the expression of a genuine kindness of nature. I was very young at the time, and could not, perhaps, realise Darwin's greatness as a scientist: but the natural sweetness of his temper and manner quite took my heart captive."

I cannot forbear quoting from a letter of Darwin's (March 3, 1863) a passage very characteristic of these qualities:

"One of my boys has the common passion for collecting postage stamps; he tells me that you issue some peculiar kinds. I know not in the least what they are and perhaps they are for India (at least—have never met with them) and can only be sold in number; but if you have odd copies and could enclose one or two of each kind deducting amount from your cheque, I shd. be glad to please my Boy; but of course you must not think of this for a minute if in any way inconvenient."

In reply, the firm informed him that these stamps were not usually sold to the public, but they gladly presented him with specimens of the 1s., 4d., 3d., 2d. and 1d. issues.

The third of these scientific Reports, written by Richard Brinsley Hinds, gave the scientific results of the Voyage of the *Sulphur*, which had sailed to the Pacific under Admiral Sir Edward Belcher.

Two volumes on the zoology appeared in 1843 and 1845, one on the botany in 1844.

Differing from these reports only in being a private and not a Government enterprise was the great work published for Sir John Herschel, who had spent five years mapping the stars of the Southern hemisphere, and on his return worked out his "Results of Astronomical Observations made during the years 1834-8 at the Cape of Good Hope." The charts were a matter of great labour; the text was well under way by 1843; the book itself, a large quarto volume, appeared in 1847, at the price of 4 guineas.

"It was an expensive work to produce," writes George Smith, "much beyond the resources of its author. The Government gave no assistance, but the Duke of Northumberland contributed more than £1,000 towards the cost of its production. I took a good deal of pains with the book and placed the plates in the hands of the best engraver possible, a Mr. Le Queux. When each plate came in I compared it with Herschel's drawing, using a compass, and sometimes a magnifying glass, to see that the engraving was accurate. I was unprepared, however, for the niceties of astronomical figures, and was much taken aback when Herschel appeared with some of the proofs, accusing them of scientific errors of the most alarming dimensions. I said I had done my best to verify their accuracy before I troubled him with them. 'Yes,' he said, 'but you did not succeed. Here, for instance, is a star which is many thousand miles out of place!'"

Though the firm carried out another existing commitment by publishing the naturalist Hugh Falconer's "*Fauna Antiqua Sivalensis*" in nine parts at a guinea each, between 1846 and 1849, the financial crisis of 1848 and George Smith's absorption in rebuilding the other branches of the business, as described in Chapter V., stopped him from undertaking any more such works as involved a large employment of capital and prolonged personal supervision. For the same reason he tells us that he did not feel justified at this time in undertaking so speculative a venture as the publication of Browning's poems.

One more book, however, of 1843, may be mentioned, which not only linked the two periods and led the way to a future issue of important and artistic volumes, but marked the alliance of the firm and later of George Smith in great intimacy with another author who, like Darwin, was to attain world-wide fame—John Ruskin.

The story is told in a subsequent chapter (VI.).

CHAPTER III

GEORGE SMITH ENTERS THE BUSINESS

THE publishing business received a new impulse in 1843. The situation must have been unique. The whole department was handed over, for a time, to the independent management of a lad of nineteen. For that was the age of George Smith when he took over the reins, with what success shall be told below.

He had been duly apprenticed to the firm at the age of fourteen, and, beginning at the bottom rung of the ladder, had acquired a thorough working knowledge of every part of the business.

A true Londoner, born and bred almost under the shadow of St. Paul's, he superadded the Londoner's keen edge and wiry resilience to his Scottish inheritance. It was a misfortune that at the age of six he had an attack of brain fever, and his mother, who showed him special indulgence, was warned against subjecting him to any severity of discipline. The result of this "domestic leniency" was that his natural high spirits and activity overflowed their due bounds and developed into a tumultuous and irresponsible sportiveness which stood in the way of his regular education.

His parents aimed at giving the boy the best education within reach, with ultimate visions of the University and the Bar, but his schooldays were cut short at fourteen. From Dr. Smith's preparatory school at Rottingdean, he went, at the age of ten, for a short time, to Merchant Taylors' School; then to a school at Blackheath. He had plenty of natural aptitude, which led him more towards mathematics and chemistry than towards the classics, but though he did very well in his school

work as far as it went, despite the unsympathetic methods of the age, it ended too soon for any completeness. His masters did not know how to harness his untamed spirits to any useful end. His impish pranks and skilful retorts, however amusing in the telling, must have driven routine-loving pedagogues to distraction. Incomprehensible too that he should be for ever fighting—and the worse for fighting—an overgrown threadpaper of a boy, not built for battle. His masters and pastors seem to have forgotten the schoolboy code of the time, when a boy had to accept the challenge of any equal in height, regardless of age or weight. Discovery of the fact that he was a prime mover in an ingenious club for promoting “rows” in school, led to his being hurriedly withdrawn before the approaching end of the term offered its tempting field of action for this one-sided fun. His master recommended that he should be sent to sea, but after a short spell at the City of London School, he was taken into the business, where he could be under his parent’s eye and find practical outlet for his energies. At home he received regular lessons in French and turned with native appreciation to good literature, but he found in the immediate details and sweeping schemes of business a working interest that captured his vagrant energies and lively imagination.

At the age of fourteen, then, he was formally apprenticed for the regular seven years—of course, without salary—to the youngest of the three partners, a member of the Clothworkers’ Company, in whose records the apprenticeship is noted under date of May 2, 1838. When his indentures expired, however, he took up his “freedom” by patrimony in his father’s Company, the Stationers, on May 3, 1846, the year after he had come of age, and slipped into his father’s place in the business.

His Reminiscences provide many graphic details of these prentice days. His father believed in thoroughness, and had him trained in every business detail from the bottom, from

making up parcels and mending quill pens, to practical book-binding. Copying presses being unknown, one of his earliest tasks was to copy all foreign letters into the letter-book, an admirable training, for S—, the third partner, who was in charge of the export department, was a past master in the art of constructing a business letter.

His hours were long, his work constant, his fare plain, for life was harder and rougher then than now. But looking back on those days, he considered that he had gained some advantages from that very hardness of training, and that he did not suffer any real harm from the hard conditions. His hours indeed were over-long, from 7.30 in the morning to 8 at night, with breaks for breakfast, dinner and tea; what saved him was the use he made of his dinner hour and the allowance his father gave him for dinner, after the family removed from their home over the shop to Denmark Hill. He went to Dyer's Riding School near Finsbury Square and learnt to ride, a practice which transformed him from a weedy, rather dyspeptic boy, into a vigorous man, and which he maintained till the last years of his life.

There being little to do between half-past seven and breakfast at nine, he used to improve the time by reading the Bible through from end to end, and got to know his favourite Book of Job nearly by heart. This mode of dispelling hours of tedium had a curious sequel. Years afterwards he was at a dinner-party, when the phrase "saved by the skin of his teeth" was quoted. "What wonderful phrases these Americans do invent!" exclaimed one of the guests, and started a discussion as to its origin. No one suspected its scriptural origin. Turning to the Dean of Westminster, who was present, and was the author of a learned commentary on the Book of Job, George Smith remarked, "You and I, at least, know where it comes from." The Dean was so delighted with his knowledge of Job, that he sent him a copy of his commentary the next day.

In the office, the boyish love of mischief worked itself off

to a great extent in active and varied occupation. Even routine could provide excitements. Something of the spirit of modern trade—of its haste and keenness, its eagerness to outrace not only all competitors, but Time itself—was already visible in the operations of the firm.

“It seemed a great matter to them to get periodicals and parcels off to India up to the latest moment, and I can remember seeing a postchaise standing at the door of the shop in Cornhill to take parcels of the *Quarterly Review* or *Edinburgh Review*, I forget which, off to Deal, so as to catch a fast ship there. It must, I suppose, have contained some article of peculiar interest to the Indian public, but it was an expensive way of sending a magazine, and could only ‘pay’ in the sense that the getting the Review to India before any other agent won for the firm a reputation for energy and enterprise. The porter at the East India House, named Toole, used to be sent to Gravesend with the latest despatches from the India Office. He was a magnificent fellow, with a splendid red livery, the father of Toole, the genial actor who has delighted several generations, and the most famous toast-master of his time. Some arrangement was come to with this gorgeous being, and he used to carry, in addition to his despatches, packages of magazines and books for Smith, Elder & Co.”

Then there was the “playing at post-office” in connection with Waghorn’s pioneer work on the Overland Route to India. The Cape Route meant intolerable delay in correspondence; Waghorn’s scheme for a route by Suez and steamer down the Red Sea promised—and effected—delivery in less than half the time. The real difficulty lay on the Isthmus. Waghorn’s triumph was in making friends personally with the marauding Arabs and organising a safe and efficient transport from Cairo to Suez by the later ‘thirties. A number of merchants interested in the Eastern trade joined to bear the cost of his experimental trips, the first being successfully pushed through in 1827. Smith, Elder & Co. were his agents; 65, Cornhill became a miniature post-office; letters were brought there, stamped, and despatched

to Marseilles, whence Waghorn took them to Suez and Bombay, bringing the return post in the same way. The cost of the journey was distributed over the letters carried, and the postage on these was, naturally, astonishing. "I can even now," George Smith says in the *Reminiscences*, "remember my father's face when he opened a letter brought by Waghorn and containing a duplicate draft for 3 or 4 pounds, the 'postage' for which was assessed at something like £25!" Of himself he notes, "I was eager, boy-like, to take part in this contest with time and space. My ambition was to ride one of the expresses between Paris and Marseilles, and I remember a fit of sulks which lasted for more than a week because my father refused his consent to this performance."

Under these stirring conditions, the boy grew up to realise the fascination of business and what may be called its fighting romance; he could feel the artistic satisfaction of engineering a stroke of business as well as enjoying material success. He speedily discovered in himself a more than ordinary fitness for business. To swift perception of ways and means, he added clear and quick decision, without after-regrets for the unattained or the unattainable. In any crisis, his first question was: "What can we do?" His mind was practical, not speculative; it looked forward; it did not re-try questions once settled. "This," he reflects, "is a mental habit which makes business easy." Add to this a certain faculty for reading men and a keen interest in business affairs which quickened his sight for everything which could affect business—before he was out of his teens he was essentially a man of action. Well it was that his genius ripened so early to meet the critical responsibilities so soon to be thrust upon him.

Of his early essays in business, he says—

"I can still smile as I look back and recall the eager audacity—to a large extent unqualified by knowledge—with which I plunged into the great world of business. I tried many

experiments. All of them were more or less original ; some were ingenious, and some succeeded. I had been much impressed while yet a boy by a book which showed how, in commercial life, large profits were sometimes extracted from transactions, minute in themselves, but great in their aggregate. When I had the opportunity, I put that bit of commercial wisdom to the test.

"I took an old schoolfellow—to go back to one of my earliest business experiments—whose father had a large Manchester warehouse, into my confidence. I asked him to get me a sheet or two of the various brown papers used in packing in his father's warehouse ; the price paid for it and the time when their accounts were paid. He got me the information I wanted and I found the accounts were paid quarterly. I next took the samples to a paper-maker and asked what he could supply me such a paper at, for payment in cash. I had now got all my data. I added a small percentage by way of profit to my paper-maker's prices, walked round the leading Manchester warehouses equipped with my sheets of paper, and in the course of a few days picked up orders for a good deal of paper on my terms, and with the arrangement that the accounts were to be paid monthly. This was, I think, my maiden business effort, and, naturally, I was exceedingly proud of it. My mother, who was always in my confidence, was, just as naturally, more proud of it even than I was. Whenever I took up any fresh enterprise she used to say, 'Another brown paper scheme?' The phrase, indeed—'George's brown paper schemes'—has, in my domestic circle, pursued me all my life.

"After I became a partner in the firm, I tried a business experiment which now seems easy and commonplace, but which, at the time, was quite unknown, and as far as I was concerned, was entirely original. With our great variety of shipments we naturally had to expend a large sum in insurance. It occurred to me that we ought to do our own insurances, or at least, to confine the insurances we effected in the various offices to the more risky ports alone. I had a list made out of all the ports to which we had shipped goods during twelve months, and took the list to my friend, Mr. William Ellis, then the best authority on insurance business in London. I explained my idea to Ellis : that there were differential risks ; that we might ourselves take the safer risks and pay premiums only on more dangerous ones. Ellis agreed. 'You can do your own insurance,' he said,

‘ for example, between London and Hong-Kong, but not between Hong-Kong and Shanghai. Between those two ports the risk is much higher.’ He took my list of the ports with which we traded, struck out half a dozen, and said, ‘ If you stick to the rest you will be safe.’ The insurance account thus adjusted brought a considerable annual balance of profit which, every five years, was carried into the profit and loss account.”

CHAPTER IV

THE BOY PUBLISHER

"ELDER," the Reminiscences record, "who had charge of the publishing department of the firm, was not a very capable man of business. He failed in judgment. He never pursued a steady policy. His enterprise had the fervours, and the chills, of an intermittent fever. I had no responsible position in the firm, but the business instinct was slowly awakening in me. I was shrewd enough to see that no steady policy was pursued in the publishing department. If a book made a success, then for a time he published almost everything that offered itself. This naturally produced a harvest of disasters; then for a while nothing at all was published. Various efforts were made to improve the management of the publishing department. A Mr. Folthorpe, who afterwards had a large library at Brighton, was engaged as manager, but with little success; a Mr. Reid followed him, who was also a failure.

"I had often discussed the matter with my mother, who had a keen and businesslike intelligence. I was eager to assume a responsible position in the business. On the deposition of Mr. Reid, the latest manager of the publishing business, I persuaded my father—who, in turn, persuaded his partners—to put me in charge of the publishing department. I was to have the modest sum of £1,500 at my disposal. I stipulated that I was not to be questioned, or interfered with, in any way as to its use; and with this sum I was to make what publishing ventures I pleased. Behold me then, a youth of not yet twenty, searching the horizon for authors whose literary bantlings I might introduce to an admiring—and, as I fondly hoped, purchasing world!

"My first venture was the publication of R. H. Horne's—'Orion' Horne's—'New Spirit of the Age.' I doubt whether any publisher has ever been as much interested in a book as I was in these particular volumes. It was, from the publisher's

point of view, my first-born. I have since had publishing and commercial ventures involving comparatively very large sums, but not one has ever given me such anxious care as these volumes. I read every line of the book, first in manuscript, and then in proof. I poured upon the unfortunate author all sorts of youthful criticisms and suggestions. I had sleepless nights over the book.

"At last we came to a deadlock. The book included an article on Colonel Perronet Thompson, a leading and very advanced politician of the day. Horne's study of Thompson was enthusiastic, and his views were not in the least likely to commend themselves to the book-buying public of that day. I felt very much as I imagine the editor of the *Quarterly Review* would feel if invited to accept an eulogium say on Mr. Tom Mann by Mr. Keir Hardie. I remonstrated with Horne, who replied that Thompson was a man of sufficient distinction to find a place in the volume, and was a man with a future. A long correspondence followed, dreadfully in earnest on my side; but Horne was firm. At length I went to Horne's residence at Kentish Town to endeavour to settle the matter in person. I have still a vivid remembrance of the interview which followed, and had a sufficient sense of humour to appreciate its absurdity even in my anxious condition of mind. I argued the matter with great earnestness, employing all the eloquent phrases I had invented during my ride to Kentish Town on the outside of an omnibus.

"Horne at last said, 'My dear young friend, you are rather excited. Let us have a little music.' He fetched his guitar and played and sang to me for half an hour; he then asked if my views were still the same. He found they had resisted even the strains of his guitar. Then Horne's good nature came to my aid. He opened his bookcase, and beckoned to me with the gesture of a tragic actor to approach. He took up the offending manuscript, written on brief paper, held one corner in his hand and motioned to me with the utmost solemnity to take the other corner. We then proceeded in funereal silence, keeping step as in a stage procession, to the fireplace, when Horne looked me in the face with a tragic expression and said, 'Throw!' We threw. The offending MS. dropped into the flames; Horne heaved a deep sigh, and I shook him warmly by the hand and departed much relieved. Any one who

remembers the quaint and picturesque personality of the author of 'Orion' * will be able to appreciate this scene.

"Thackeray reviewed Horne's book in the *Morning Chronicle*, and, on the whole, favourably, though he sadly hurt Horne's feelings by, in effect, calling him 'a Cockney,' which to Horne seemed the sum of all discredit. The droll little man came to me in Cornhill with the preface to a new edition in which he proposed to overwhelm his critics, including Thackeray. We adjourned to the Wool Pack, a quiet tavern in St. Peter's Alley, Cornhill, where I generally had my lunch, and there the preface was discussed. I remember how vain I felt at having suggested an expression about the 'scorching glare of the Bay of Mexico, or the thunders of the gulf of Florida,' which Horne accepted with acclamation as a substitute for some tamer phrase he had used. Horne had undoubtedly a strain of genius, but it was linked to a most uncertain judgment, and was often qualified by a plentiful lack of common sense. He once submitted to me the MS. of a most extraordinary novel. It was wonderfully clever, but from a publisher's point of view was quite impossible.

"My second book was 'The Queens of the Stage' by Mrs. Baron Wilson.† The work was of no special merit, but not financially unsuccessful. The authoress was a middle-aged widow—or 'grass-widow'—who exercised a somewhat florid hospitality in Woburn Place. The behaviour at her entertainments was of a decidedly free and easy kind. It was the sort of house where, if any one wanted a piece of bread at supper, some one else would throw it across the table to him. I published a small volume of poems for Mrs. Wilson's daughter. Her mother paid for the publication, because, as she confided to me, 'I want my daughter to marry, and it is a good thing for a girl to have a literary reputation'!"

* As another instance of his oddity he published the first edition of "Orion" at a farthing a copy; the price of the second edition was a shilling, and that of the fifth, half a crown.

† Mrs. Baron Wilson was a versatile writer of poetry, plays, and biography, who had already contributed to "The Diadem" and "Friendship's Offering." The exact title of her book was "Our Actresses, or Glances at Stage Favourites Past and Present" (1844)—two volumes with five engravings in each volume, including portraits of Miss O'Neill, Miss Helen Faucit, and Mrs. Charles Kean.

His next publishing venture brought him, by a strange path, into relations with Leigh Hunt. One of his early friends was Thomas Powell, a superior clerk in the office of Chapman Brothers, the publishers. He was one of the proprietors of the *New Quarterly Review*, which had recently been started, and had a considerable circle of literary friends, whom George Smith used to meet, both at Powell's house at Peckham and at the Museum Club, to which Powell introduced him. To quote Sir Sidney Lee: "Powell himself migrated to America in 1849 and becoming a professional man of letters, published some frankly ill-natured sketches of writers he had met, under the title of 'Living Authors of England'; this was followed by 'Living Authors of America'; first series, 1850."

George Smith tells the Leigh Hunt story as follows:

"I went to Peckham to dine with Mr. Powell, and while I waited in his little drawing-room for a few minutes before dinner, I took up a neatly written MS. which was lying on the table, and was reading it when Powell entered the room. 'Ah!' he said, 'that doesn't look worth £40, does it? I advanced £40 to Leigh Hunt on the security of that MS. and I shall never see my money again.'

"When I was leaving I asked Powell to let me take the MS. with me. I finished reading it before I went to sleep that night and next day I asked Powell if he would let me have the MS. if I paid him the £40. He readily assented; and, having got from him Leigh Hunt's address, I went off to him at Kensington, explained the circumstances under which the MS. had come into my possession, and asked whether, if I paid him an additional £60, I might have the copyright. 'You young prince!' cried Leigh Hunt in a tone of something like rapture, and the transaction was promptly concluded. The work was 'Imagination and Fancy.'

"It was succeeded by 'Wit and Humour' and other books, all of which were successful, and the introduction was the foundation of a friendship with Leigh Hunt, and with the members of his family, which was very delightful to me.

"Leigh Hunt was of tall stature, with sallow, not to say yellow complexion, and long hair. His mouth lacked refinement

and firmness, but he had large expressive eyes. His manner, however, had such a fascination, that after he had spoken for five minutes, one forgot how he looked. He wrote the most charming letters, perfect alike in form and spirit.

"I particularly enjoyed the simple, old-fashioned suppers to which he frequently invited me. His daughter played and sang to us, and Leigh Hunt told us the most delightful stories of his Italian travels, and of Shelley and Byron (whom he always called 'Birron'). I lived on the north side of the Park, and I remember I used to get over the palings to cross Kensington Gardens, and thus shorten the distance home. The palings of those days were easily 'negotiated' by an active young man.

"Business was by no means Leigh Hunt's strong point. I once had to pay him a sum of money—either £100 or £200—and I wrote him a cheque for the amount. 'Well,' he said, 'what am I to do with this little bit of paper?' I told him that if he presented it at the Bank they would pay him cash for it, but I added, 'I will save you that trouble.' I went to the Bank and cashed the cheque for him. He took the notes away carefully enclosed in an envelope.

"Two days afterwards Leigh Hunt came in a state of great agitation to tell me his wife had burned the envelope containing the bank-notes! He had thrown the envelope carelessly down, and his wife had flung it into the fire. Leigh Hunt's agitation while on his way to bring this news, had not prevented him from purchasing on the road a little statuette of Psyche, which he carried, without any paper round it, in his hand. I told him I thought something might be done in the matter. I sent to the bankers and got the number of the notes, and then, in company with Leigh Hunt, went off to the Bank of England. I explained our business, and we were shown into a room where three old gentlemen were sitting at writing tables. They kept us waiting some time, and Leigh Hunt, who had meanwhile been staring all round the room, at last got up, walked up to one of these staid officials, and addressing him said, in wondering tones, 'And *this* is the Bank of England! And do you sit here all day and never see the green woods, and the trees and flowers, and the charming country?' Then, in tones of remonstrance, he demanded, 'Are you contented with such a life?' All this time he was holding the little naked Psyche in one hand, and with his long hair and flashing eyes, made a surprising figure. I

fancy I can still see the astonished faces of the three officials : they would have made a most delightful picture. I said, ' Come away, Mr. Hunt ! These gentlemen are very busy.' I succeeded in carrying Leigh Hunt off, and, after entering into some formalities, we were told that the value of the notes would be paid in twelve months. I gave Leigh Hunt the money at once, and he went away rejoicing.

" On the whole, my first modest experiences in publishing were successful, and brought me into pleasant social relations with several authors ; I remember I was very indignant that the firm would not allow me to add the profits of my venture to the original sum which formed my publishing capital. I had reckoned on increasing that capital by the profits I made until I could undertake really large transactions ; but this expectation was disappointed, and my yearly profits melted into the general balance-sheet of the firm."

This year of promising adventure was scarcely finished before his father showed signs of the illness which was to prove fatal a couple of years later. Unable to continue the strain of business, he moved with his family to a house at Box Hill, where he found occupation in farming a small plot of eight or ten acres with all the thoroughness of his old business habits, discovering for himself the virtues of the *petite culture*. The amazing crops raised from his fields, when treated as a garden, changed into admiration the mild contempt of his neighbouring farmers for the amateur efforts of the " Lunnoner."

It was a time of great anxiety for the whole family. The case before long growing hopeless, the father retired from the firm, his place being taken by his son, who had just come of age. Elder also decided to retire at the same time, and leaving London, lived another thirty-one years, always maintaining a lively interest in the ventures of the firm. He died at Lancing, February 6, 1876, at the age of 86.

The reconstituted firm consisted of S—— and George Smith ; the former managing the foreign branch of the business, the latter all the other affairs of the firm.

For the eighteen months between the withdrawal and death of his father, George Smith lived in lodgings, immersed in business from early morning to ten at night. His abundant energy spent itself in consuming industry, for he knew that his mother and sisters were dependent on his success. His only rest or recreation was the Sunday spent at Box Hill ; and once or twice a week he would hire a horse and gig, and leaving London at eight or nine, drive through the darkness to spend the night with his family.

His father died on August 21, 1846, at the age of 57. Mrs. Smith came to London, and her son joined her at Westbourne Place, Bayswater.

Here must be chronicled another venture, undertaken while George Smith was head of the publishing department, and continued later—the works of G. P. R. James, “ the grandiloquent writer of blood-curdling romance.” In 1844 the firm began a collected edition of his existing works, issuing eleven volumes by 1847, while ten more were issued by another firm.

“ But with regard to his new books,” writes George Smith, “ they had in addition a sort of permanent literary contract with him, that they should take all his novels and pay him a certain price, varying from £600 to £700 for the first edition of 1,000 to 1,500 copies. This went on agreeably enough until we had published three or four novels. Then there came a hitch. James understood our arrangement to mean that we should take as many novels as he wrote. Now he was prolific and diligent and wrote so fast that I had the MSS. of three or four novels in my safe waiting for publication before the one last published had moved off. I grew tired at last of paying for MSS. which I saw no reasonable prospect of being soon able to publish, and I declined to take any more till those already in my hands had been printed. But Mr. James’s view was that we were under contract to take every novel he brought to us ! We argued the matter keenly from our different standpoints, and one morning he brought with him as an ally, Mr. W. Harrison Ainsworth. He came as Mr. Weller senior’s friends once did on a famous

occasion, 'to see fair play.' Harrison Ainsworth presented a very striking appearance. He was a kind of copy of Count D'Orsay; brilliant with pins and rings and long oiled locks all combined with what may be called a Pall Mall manner. Two authors against one poor and very youthful publisher was rather overpowering odds; but I had to hold my own. Mr. James afterwards asked me to meet him at his solicitor's, Messrs. Capron & Co. I went, and Capron began to cross-examine me in a highly legal manner as to our contract. I said I did not expect to meet a solicitor in this fashion, who, for all I could tell, might be manufacturing evidence against me, and I declined to say anything on these terms. I added that, if he liked to make another appointment, I had no doubt my own solicitor would accompany me, and then we could discuss the matter on equal terms. James afterwards withdrew his contention, and we came to an amicable compromise. Altogether, the firm published nine novels of his between 1845 and 1848: three-volume novels at 31s. 6d., so that his four years' output was offered to the public at 13½ guineas. The public was surfeited; his circulation gradually fell off. G. H. Lewes said the fall was due to the fact that the doctors had ceased to recommend his books, with a milk-diet, as unexciting reading for patients recovering from a fever! James's personal appearance was—like his literary style—tame and commonplace, lacking anything characteristic. His popularity—and for a while he was popular—shows how mild was the literary taste of the period."

CHAPTER V

A BUSINESS CYCLONE—1848

THE crisis which came near to wrecking the firm is best told in George Smith's own words :

" My father had withdrawn from the business. Everything was prospering. I had mastered my new duties and felt both pleasure and confidence in their discharge ; when suddenly (after a couple of years) there broke upon the firm a great business disaster ; a disaster due not to losses without, but to frauds within. I made the discovery that my partner had been, for many years, appropriating the money of the firm by means of erasures in the books and other falsifications. I pushed my examination till I found that his defalcations reached to more than £30,000 ; then I examined no further.

" The story of how I made this discovery is curious. I could not understand why, with the amount of trade we were doing, there was not more cash to our credit in the bank. We had a large ' turn-over ' ; our transactions were profitable ; yet our bank balance was always at the vanishing point. I noticed, too, that several firms of the highest standing apparently allowed their accounts to remain for a long time unpaid. It was quite contrary to their previous custom. The accounts against these firms went into my partner's hands for presentation to their London agents ; but why were no payments made in return ? Up to this stage, I had no suspicion whatever of any fraud ; but, as a matter of curiosity, I got a friend, who was intimate with the Chief Clerk at the bank where one of these particular firms who had apparently made no payments to us did business, to make some inquiries for me. Had any cheques been paid by the firm named to Smith, Elder & Co. ? I found that cheques for certain amounts, at certain dates, had been drawn in our favour, and these corresponded with the sums due to us ; but, on examination, I found that these cheques had not been paid

to our credit, nor entered into our ledger. I found a similar state of things, and for a period extending over some years, in the case of other firms. There was clearly something wrong, but I had no suspicion as to who might be the wrong-doer.

"One day I was turning over my partner's own account in the firm's books, when my eye was caught by the faint sign of an erasure. When the page was held up against the light the sign of the erasure was clear. The entry in the ledger was a debit of £35 against him; on turning to the corresponding entry in the cash book the amount was £435, and the figure 4 had been erased in the ledger.

"I gathered all my proofs together, called my partner into my room and told him there was a matter which must be gone into at once. 'It will do to-morrow, won't it?' he asked. 'I am very busy now.' 'No,' I said; 'this must be settled at once.' Then I showed him what I had discovered. He stammered, grew pale, then put his face into his hands and commenced to sob and weep. I said: 'This will do for to-day. You had better go home. To-morrow we will see what is to be said about the matter.'

"It is difficult to describe the shock all this was to me. I was little more than a youth, my partner was fifteen years my senior, and I had always looked up to him with an almost passionate admiration. He was a man of brilliant social gifts, moving in the best circles, a fine talker, a clever writer, so that the personal shock to my feelings was overwhelming. I had almost worshipped him; he was my ideal in nearly every respect; and the discovery that for years he had been a thief might well have shaken my faith in mankind generally. Then the effect on the firm's affairs was serious. A bright horizon was suddenly turned black. I could not, at first, tell whether the firm was solvent or hopelessly insolvent. Every penny belonging to my mother and sisters was invested in the business; so was the entire capital of Mr. Elder. Large sums had been deposited with the firm, too, by Mr. Æneas Mackintosh, my partner's guardian, and by Sir John Herschel, his brother-in-law. I felt at first quite crushed and used to walk about my room all night trying to find some way out of the disaster. My mother was my confidante, and showed her usual noble courage. For myself, personally, the easiest plan would have been to let the business go into bankruptcy. But I had others to think of. I had the

honour of the firm to consider. My mother's whole fortune was at stake, and the sole provision for my sisters and brothers, all then very young.

"I went to see Mr. Æneas Mackintosh and told him the story. To my surprise he listened to my narrative quite calmly. 'I am going,' he said, 'to spend a day or two with a friend at Hampstead. When I come back I will consider the affair.' He was a cool, unsympathetic man, and I found I could expect neither sympathy nor help from him.

"At last I made my decision. The business was prosperous and profitable; if it could be carried on there was every hope that all liabilities would be discharged. I was willing to undertake the burden, but I made my own conditions. I would deal generously with my partner, but I would not continue in partnership with him. His friends, I may say, made no attempt to defend his conduct. His brother-in-law, Sir John Herschel, in particular, insisted that he should be placed absolutely in my hands. I decided that he should continue his position in the business, should have the same allowance that he had been accustomed to draw under the partnership agreement, but should handle no money. There remained the question of the liabilities due by the firm. I undertook to meet all these liabilities by payments extending over several years. My mother would leave her capital in the business under these conditions, and I would carry it on; but I insisted that adequate time should be given and should be legally assured to me; for I felt I could not work if I had a constant peril hanging over my head. I had to negotiate with clever and experienced men of the world. I sometimes felt rather helpless, but my line was simple and I kept it resolutely. It is the small and apparently trivial incidents in such negotiations that impress themselves in one's mind. I had an interview with a Mr. R——, a nephew of Mackintosh, at an hotel near London Bridge where he was staying. He asked me to talk to him and explain my terms while he ate his dinner. He listened with irritating calmness while I explained my plans, and seemed more interested in his dinner than in anything else. When I had finished he proceeded to help himself to a piece of pigeon pie, remarking with an easy smile, 'Well, for my part, I see nothing but bankruptcy before you!' 'No,' said I, trying to pose in imitation of the man of the world, 'nor do I if that is your view.' Mr. R—— was a little taken aback

by my reply ; he wanted not the bankruptcy of the firm but better terms for his friends. He lowered his tone, but demanded larger instalments, and payment at shorter intervals, than I had proposed. But I was firm. I said it was only by limiting my expenditure within the narrowest possible limits, and by working like a slave, that I could pull the business through, and I emphatically insisted that I was by no means sure of being able to succeed. But I would do all that was possible to prevent the creditors being in a worse position than if the firm at once went into the bankruptcy court. An attempt was made at this stage to induce me to retain my partner under a joint guarantee from his brothers against any future dishonesty on his part. I simply said : ‘ If the only alternative is bankruptcy I will myself take that mode of dissolving the partnership.’

“ The strain upon me during these negotiations may be imagined. I was often in such a state of nervous agitation that I could not lie down upon my bed. My mother, with her serene courage and clear intelligence, was of the greatest help to me. Without her I do not believe that I could have sustained the combined stress of anxiety and work. Her cheerful spirit never forsook her : in looking back I can see that she devoted herself to sustaining my courage ; she even made fun of our perilous position. One Sunday, when I was unusually depressed, she took me for a walk in Kensington Gardens ; a more wretched creature than I felt, and I suppose looked, when we started for our walk, can hardly be imagined, but my mother had evidently set her heart on cheering me. She had some gift of mimicry, and she drew such a humorous picture of the result of our utter ruin, when she expressed her intention, if the worst came, of having a Berlin wool shop in the Edgware Road, and so admirably mimicked one of my sisters—who was regarded in the family as having rather a gift for display—serving behind the counter, that I could not restrain my laughter, and returned home in a different and more hopeful condition of mind.

“ At last, negotiations were completed, and my position was clear. I had the sole control of the business, and considering the burdens that had to be carried, the position was one which taxed in no ordinary degree the courage and judgment of a man of my age and experience. But to sum up this stage of my story, I may say that I was able to meet all the liabilities I had

undertaken, and that in much less time than the time agreed upon.*

“But I had to consider my new position and the policy it made necessary. I found that my publishing business was at once seriously affected. I came to the conclusion that while I might honestly carry on the ordinary business of the firm, I ought not to enter into any transactions involving risk which could possibly be avoided. Now no one can carry on a publishing business without taking speculative risks. So the publishing branch of the firm had to be rigidly limited. On this ground I declined to publish several important books which, under ordinary circumstances, I should have eagerly welcomed.

“The strain of all these distressing experiences told sorely on my health. My constitution was not vigorous, I not infrequently fainted; and when, as a security for my mother, I thought it right to insure my life for a large amount, I had a great difficulty in effecting the insurances.

“I worked with all the intensity and zeal of which I was capable. The situation was one to bring out all that there was in me; and the work I got through was sometimes enormous. In addition to my previous duties I had to take in hand the Indian and Colonial correspondence, of which my partner had previously been in charge. This work was naturally more difficult for me, at first, as the details of it were new, but I quickly mastered it. I must in those days have had great powers of endurance. The correspondence was heavy, the letters were often both very long and very important. I used to dictate to two clerks, while two others were occupied in copying. It was a common thing for me with many of the clerks to work till three or four o'clock in the morning, and occasionally, when there was but a short interval between the arrival and departure of the Indian mails, I used to start work at nine o'clock in the morning and did not leave my room, or cease dictating, until seven o'clock the next evening, when the mail was dispatched. During these thirty-four hours of continuous work I was supported by mutton chops and green tea at stated intervals.

“Looking back now, I don't think I need have done so much work personally. Business methods have improved, and heads of firms have learned to delegate to responsible clerks much

* His partner retired to India, and died at Calcutta Jan. 13, 1852.

work which in those days they did themselves. The perfection of business wisdom, I have learned, is never to do a thing with your own hand that other people can do as well, or nearly as well.

"This rate of work was maintained till after I was married and was about twenty-nine or thirty years of age. I believe I maintained my health by active exercise on foot and horseback, and by being able, after these excessive stretches of work, to sleep soundly for many hours. On these occasions I generally got to bed at about eleven and slept till three or four o'clock the next afternoon.

"With vigilant management, and pushed with energy in this degree, the business grew fast and become highly prosperous. We had a staff of two hundred clerks; our transactions ran into great figures and took the most diverse forms.

"Half a dozen lines of figures may be given which will show expressively how fast the business expanded under the stimulus of energy which I infused into it. Here, for example, are the amounts which passed through the banking account of the firm in successive periods of five years:

1846,	£ 48,088.
1851,	£ 57,506.
1856,	£175,989.
1861,	£405,163.
1866,	£627,129.

"Thus, the volume of business done increased over thirteen-fold in twenty years."

During these busy years the head of the firm had, as may be supposed, little time for recreation, save occasionally at the theatre, and he tells how he conceived a youth's passionate admiration for Helen Faucit, who was afterwards to become one of the family's dearest friends as the wife of Theodore Martin. Another early admiration of his was the graceful and sweet-voiced Ariel of Miss P. Horton. But meeting years afterwards spelt humorous disillusion. She was Ariel no more, but Mrs. German Reed, a lady of enormous proportions.

Another recreation was found in dining at the Museum Club.

This was a small literary club to which, as already mentioned, he was introduced by his friend, Thomas Powell. It ultimately collapsed for want of funds ; but while it flourished it was the somewhat Bohemian resort of many wits and writers, whose conversation sparkled lightly and brightly over the wine with much mirth and jollity. Here, besides Leigh Hunt, he began friendships with various men whom he afterwards rallied round the standard of the *Cornhill*, such as G. H. Lewes and Dr. Mahony, better known as " Father Prout."

CHAPTER VI

FOUR FRIENDS—(i) JOHN RUSKIN

BEFORE we come to the foundation of the *Cornhill Magazine*, the literary history of Smith, Elder includes the connection with four great writers: Ruskin, Charlotte Brontë, Thackeray, and Mrs. Gaskell. That the history of a business house should be so closely interwoven with personal friendships is due to George Smith's attitude towards books and writers. In publishing, he found a relief from the harsher stress of other business; a field where he could indulge his taste for speculation tempered by common sense and without fear of imperilling his fortunes. Books interested him, and he delighted in the society of authors. The personal note was struck; to secure a client was the first step towards gaining a friend.

The personal connection with Ruskin and his family began early in 1843. "Friendship's Offering," as already recorded, had published two poems by "J. R.," the unknown undergraduate of Christ Church, Oxford. This, doubtless, was the reason why John Ruskin senior came hotfoot to Cornhill from Albemarle Street, where Mr. Murray had listened, unkindled by paternal enthusiasms, to the proposal for publishing the youth's MS. on art at the Ruskins' expense. "What seemed chiefly to offend Mr. Ruskin was the fact that Murray had declined to read the book in manuscript. If he was going to publish it, he remarked, he had better put it into type and then he would read it." Thus the elder Ruskin unbosomed himself in Cornhill and produced the book. It was "Modern Painters."

The title was due to the publishers, Ruskin originally naming

it "Turner and the Ancients." The subject, no doubt, appealed to Elder's artistic tastes, which he could indulge with safety in a book published on commission terms. Volume I. appeared in April 1843. Popular appreciation was slow. Of the five hundred copies of the first edition, only one hundred and five were sold in the twelvemonth. One ventures to wonder whether, if "Modern Painters" had been George Smith's first bantling, instead of Horne's "New Spirit of the Age," he would have started it on a speedier career of success. But it was published a few months before he began his astonishing work as a boy-publisher. In 1846, however, when it came to publishing the second volume, he felt confident enough to print fifteen hundred copies. Still "Modern Painters" only paved the way to more definite success with "The Seven Lamps of Architecture" in 1849, Ruskin's earliest book to do well in its first edition.

Such was the beginning of a thirty years' business alliance and close friendship during which Smith, Elder published all Ruskin's books.

George Smith was a frequent guest at the elder Ruskins' house and afterwards at their son's, meeting there artists such as Richmond and Millais, who subsequently helped to illustrate the *Cornhill*, and Alexander Munro, the sculptor, who modelled a beautiful bust of Mrs. Smith. The elder Ruskin, who had been a student under Nasmyth, kept up his connection with art and artists after he entered business in 1809, joining the firm of Peter Domecq, the full style being Ruskin, Telford & Domecq, Sherry Importers, of whom it was said that "Domecq supplied the sherry, Telford the capital, and Ruskin the brains."

This early entry into the Ruskin circle was a valuable and stimulating influence; at the same time, the interplay between the notable characters of the family often appealed to his sense of humour. To John Ruskin's parents the brilliant youth "was little less than a demigod; it was striking to notice the affection

and the admiration with which they hung upon all he said and did. . . . Withal, Ruskin's father was a clever and shrewd man with a good deal of humour. His mother was absolutely destitute of the faintest trace of it. She would interrupt her brilliant son when he was talking in a fashion which held us spell-bound, by a correction on some trivial and perfectly irrelevant detail. 'No, John,' she would say, 'you are not right. It was 11 o'clock at night and not 11.30;' or she would break in: 'Now, John, don't say those things! You know quite well to-morrow you will say something perfectly different!' Mrs. Ruskin was an ardent, not to say pugnacious, Protestant; and I remember winning a bet by wagering that before the evening was out, Mrs. Ruskin would call the Virgin Mary 'a creature.' She did. I had only to introduce the topic, and say something to stir up Mrs. Ruskin's theological ardour, and I won my bet!"

George Smith sums up his personal impressions of Ruskin by saying that he "was essentially a man of surprises. You never knew what paradox he would produce next, nor how ably he would sustain it. That he was a brilliant talker goes without saying, especially on his own subject, art. Later on, when absorbed in social economy, his talk lost something of its charm. Of all the surprises—literary and other—that came to me at his table, the greatest occurred one evening when he volunteered to sing a nigger song, and sang it with great energy! I was lost in astonishment. One would as soon have expected the Bishop of London to dance a breakdown."

Ruskin's earliest incursions into social economy came to a head in a series of articles in the first volume of the *Cornhill*, "Unto this Last." In the course of time the cardinal points of his "Vision Splendid" have come to stand clear of their unhelpful wrappings; the value of human dignity and moral considerations in making the life worth living, the proper use of wealth, the stress on duties as well as rights—these are now all part and parcel of practical ideals of the State. But in 1860 the opposition

he provoked was so violent that after the fourth number the *Cornhill* cut short the series. It was the same when he renewed his efforts in *Fraser's Magazine*. The fault lay as much in Ruskin's method as in any general antipathy to strange and revolutionary ideas. He was paradoxical and obscure, deficient in sequence and order of argument; his serious propositions were difficult to distinguish from his whimsical flights, and when he tackled the economists, his credit was shaken by his inadequate knowledge of the points he attacked. Thus he illustrated the dictum that the goodness of a cause is not to be judged by the value of the advocacy employed.

The request to discontinue these articles did not alter the friendly relations between author and publisher, for all that it might have been, as George Smith jestingly reflected, "the first thing that qualified the friendly opinion Ruskin had hitherto entertained for my judgment." He had a prophet's belief in his new teaching, which he valued far above the fame he had already attained in matters of art. Of this George Smith tells a story :

"On his birthday, two interesting events always occurred : his father always gave us a glass of the 'Nelson' sherry, and one of us had to propose John Ruskin's health; and we listened with keen pleasure to the son's always eloquent response. On one occasion I was asked to propose Ruskin's health; and, having had a glass of the famous 'Nelson' sherry, I thought I had made—in spite of my usual diffidence—a rather neat little speech. But to my amazement, John Ruskin was indignant. I had said, he declared in his reply, the kindest things—much more than he deserved—in respect to his writings on art and the influence of those writings on the world generally; but I had left out the only thing he had done worth mentioning—his contributions to the science of social economy !

"The famous 'Nelson' sherry deserves, perhaps, a word of explanation. Shortly before the Battle of Trafalgar, Nelson sent an order to Mr. Ruskin's firm for some sherry. They sent him the finest they had; then, on sentimental grounds, the

partners decided that not another glass from that particular butt should be sold. Each member of the firm, however, was allowed his portion, paying for it at the price at which it stood in the firm's ledger. The first time I was present when the famous sherry was produced, and its history narrated, I said to Mr. Ruskin : ' I am bold enough to ask you a question which every one at the table would like to ask, but lacks the necessary courage to do so. At what price does the " Nelson " sherry stand in the ledger ? ' ' Ah,' said Mr. Ruskin, ' I was thinking of that as I drove into the City this morning, and I made a rough calculation which shows that at present it stands at about a guinea a glass.' ' And very cheap at the money, too,' said a Mr. Prichard, at that time Member for Broseley. ' I'll have another glass ! '

" After his father's death (March 3, 1864) John Ruskin took rather erratic views in respect to the publication of his works. He wanted to apply the principles of his social economy to them. He insisted that there should be a certain price fixed upon each book, and that the booksellers should add what they pleased as their profit ; but in this way the purchaser would know exactly what the profit was. This arrangement did not suit the booksellers, and, as a consequence, his books had a comparatively small sale. I was on my own ground in this discussion, and Ruskin did not like a debate in which he had not the best of the argument. On his own topics he always had so much the best of the argument that whenever he asked me my opinion on any work of art, or architecture, I used to say : ' No, no, tell me your opinion first, and then I will agree with it ! ' Ruskin destroyed all my pleasure in my room at Waterloo Place which I had furnished with what I fondly hoped was sound taste. His admiration of two marble busts supporting the mantelpiece was so enthusiastic that I said : ' I am so glad you like them ; what do you think of my carpet ? Are not the flowers beautiful ? ' ' Flowers ! ' he said with a look of the deepest scorn. ' Flowers ! Pickled cabbage, you mean ! ' I never liked that carpet afterwards.

" Ruskin removed his books from my firm for a reason which seems to me to show that publishers suffer occasionally because authors are bad business men.

" After relations which were sufficiently intimate for us to address each other as ' my dear Ruskin ' and ' my dear Smith,' I received, without any preamble, a formal letter from a firm

of solicitors, requesting that certain plates which Mr. Ruskin believed to be his property should be delivered to a printer who was named. The letter was addressed not to me personally but to the firm. It is always well to let lawyer answer lawyer, and I handed the letter to my solicitors, asking them to reply. Some formal correspondence followed. I was curious to know what was the cause of this sudden change. I said to my solicitor, 'Can you find out for me what has induced Mr. Ruskin to take this line with us?' He happened to be intimate with a member of the firm acting for Mr. Ruskin, and had no difficulty in obtaining the information I wanted. Mr. Ruskin, he told me, felt aggrieved that I had offered him a certain yearly payment in respect of some of his books which he regarded as very inadequate. This was very surprising to me. I said I had never made an offer of an annual payment to Mr. Ruskin, and there must be some extraordinary misapprehension on his part. Further inquiry was made and it practically came to this: Ruskin asked me to make an offer for certain books; and made a calculation as to what the amount I offered would yield annually if invested in Consols. On comparing this income with what the books had hitherto produced he concluded that my proposal was inadequate in an almost unpardonable degree!

"Soon after I received a letter from Ruskin couched in the old familiar manner, enclosing a copy of a letter he had written to a lady in America. The American lady had asked for permission to print one of his books—or extracts from his books—and he sent me a letter which he wished me to forward to her.

"I sent him back the letter and said of course he might do as he liked about sending it; but I foresaw that shortly after its receipt there would be large head-lines in the American papers, 'Quarrel between Mr. Ruskin and his publishers,' with appropriate comments. For my part I said I declined to have any hand in the transmission of the letter.

"Ruskin replied that he had thought better of me than to suppose I cared what people said about me in newspapers or anywhere else. I said that he did me no more than justice; but there was something else involved. Articles in American papers were frequently quoted here, and I foresaw a correspondence between Mr. Ruskin and myself which might give me trouble; and I had an objection to working for nothing.

"Notwithstanding all this I have every reason to suppose

that Mr. Ruskin has always cherished kindly feelings towards me, as I certainly have towards him. I know that on one occasion when he was requested to furnish particulars for a newspaper or magazine article, he told the writer that 'whatever he said he must not say a word against his old publisher.' In one of his papers, written with all his usual discursive eloquence, while talking in his exalted manner of the joys and sorrows of life, he says, 'for my part, what I should like best at the present moment, would be to be sitting at one side of the table, and my old publisher at the other, with a bottle of my father's sherry and a plate of walnuts between us, listening to some of his good stories.' "

George Smith, for his part, had a personal and business satisfaction in the connexion and the steady growth of his friend's popularity. Three volumes, as has been said, were published in the 'forties. Of the five and twenty volumes and pamphlets published between 1850 and 1860, from "The King of the Golden River" and "The Stones of Venice" to the annual "Notes on the Royal Academy" and the fifth and last volume of "Modern Painters," though the larger books sold slowly, the smaller ones went well. Eight were published in the 'sixties, including "The Crown of Wild Olive," "Sesame and Lilies," and "Queen of the Air." In 1871 began "Fors Clavigera"; in 1872 appeared four books, "The Eagle's Nest," "Munera Pulveris," "Aratra Pentelici," and "Michael Angelo and Tintoret." Then came the differences as to bookselling and so forth already described, to which were added difficulties in regard to reprints of "Modern Painters" and "The Stones of Venice." Many of the plates were worn; Ruskin had scruples about replacing or retouching them now that the original engraver, Thomas Lupton, was dead. He wished to have limited editions printed, and thereafter no reprint of his early works.

Accordingly from 1871 onwards he employed George Allen to help him carry out his own ideas, and step by step his work was placed with Allen, and on September 5, 1878, all his old books were transferred from Smith, Elder.

CHAPTER VII

FOUR FRIENDS—(ii) CHARLOTTE BRONTË—WITH A FEW WORDS ON SMITH WILLIAMS

PLUNGED into the turmoil of the twofold business of the firm, George Smith could not devote much time to the development of the publishing department. The helper he needed was not so much a business man, for the conclusion of business arrangements he regularly kept in his own hands, as a man of literary instinct, practical, with a flair at once for good literary quality in the MSS. submitted to him, and for the other qualities which make for popularity and profit.

His choice of the man who was to hold the literary helm for thirty years was characteristic of his judgment of men and character.

He tells the story thus :—

“ When I first came into full control of the business, I felt the necessity for getting efficient assistance in the publishing department. A happy accident gave me the man I sought. The accounts of the firm had fallen into some confusion in consequence of my father’s illness. Mr. Elder, who, on my father’s breakdown, took charge of them, was but a poor accountant. Among the first tasks to which I devoted myself was that of bringing the accounts of the firm into proper order. One account with the lithographers, who had printed the illustrations for ‘ The Voyage of the *Beagle* ’ and for other books of less magnitude, was in an almost hopeless state of confusion. It had not been balanced for years, sums being paid ‘ on account ’ from time to time, without any examination of the items.

“ I went to see the bookkeeper of the firm concerned—Mr. W. Smith Williams—taking with me a bundle of accounts with a view to getting them arranged in proper form. Mr. Williams’s gifts as a bookkeeper I soon found were of a most primitive

character. I asked him how he had struck his numerous balances, remarking that we had no corresponding balances in our books. 'Oh,' said Mr. Williams, 'those are the bottoms of the pages in our ledger; I always strike a balance at the bottom of a page to save the trouble of carrying over the figures on both sides!' I had a good many interviews with Mr. Williams, and if he was not a good bookkeeper he was a most agreeable and most intelligent man, a man with literary gifts wasted in uncongenial work. My sympathy was excited by seeing one of so much ability occupied with work which he did ill, and which was distasteful to him; and by noticing the overbearing manner in which he was treated by the junior member of the firm which employed him. Mr. Williams confided to me that, by way of relief from his bookkeeping efforts, he contributed reviews and other articles to the *Spectator*, then making its high position under the able editorship of Mr. Rintoul. Mr. Williams used also to write theatrical criticisms for the *Spectator*, but found himself hampered a good deal, he said, by the chilly temperament of his editor, who used to say, in his most impressive manner, 'The *Spectator* is *not* enthusiastic, and must not be'!

"I fancied I had discovered the man who could help me in my publishing business. I invited Mr. Williams to my lodgings in Regent Street, and after tea I said to him, 'Rightly or wrongly, I do not think you like your present occupation?' 'I *hate* it,' said Mr. Williams with fervour. This reply made clear sailing for me, and before he left my room we had arranged that he should come to Cornhill as my literary assistant and general manager of the publishing department. It was for both of us a happy arrangement. Mr. Williams remained with me until his advancing years obliged him to retire from active work. He was loyal, diligent, of shrewd literary judgment and pleasant manners, and proved a most valuable assistant; and his relations with me and my family were always of the most cordial description."

Sir Sidney Lee adds the following biographical note:—

"William Smith Williams (1800–1875) played a useful part behind the scenes of the theatre of nineteenth-century literature. He was by nature too modest to gain any wide recognition. He began active life in 1817 as apprentice to the publishing

firm of Taylor & Hessey of Fleet Street, who published writings of Charles Lamb, Coleridge, and Keats, and became in 1821 proprietors of the *London Magazine*. Williams cherished from boyhood a genuine love of literature, and received much kindly notice from eminent writers associated with Taylor & Hessey. Besides Keats, he came to know Leigh Hunt and William Hazlitt. Marrying at twenty-five he opened a bookshop on his own account in a court near the Poultry, but insufficient capital compelled him to relinquish this venture in 1827, when he entered the counting-house of the lithographic printers, Hullmandel & Walter, where Smith met him. At that time he was devoting his leisure to articles on literary or theatrical topics for the *Spectator*, *Athenæum*, and other weekly papers. During the thirty years that he spent in Smith's employ he won, by his sympathetic criticism and kindly courtesy, the cordial regard of many distinguished authors whose works Smith, Elder & Co. published. The paternal consideration that he showed to Charlotte Brontë is well known; it is fully described in Mrs. Gaskell's *Life of Miss Brontë*. 'He was my first favourable critic,' wrote Charlotte Brontë in 1847; 'he first gave me encouragement to persevere as an author.' When she first saw him at Cornhill in 1848, she described him as 'a pale, mild, stooping man of fifty.' Subsequently she thought him 'too much given to contemplative theorising,' and possessed by 'too many abstractions.' With Thackeray, Ruskin, and Lewes he was always on very friendly terms. During his association with Smith he did no independent literary work beyond helping to prepare for the firm, in 1861, a 'Selection from the Writings of John Ruskin.' He was from youth a warm admirer of Ruskin, sharing especially his enthusiasm for Turner. Williams retired from Smith, Elder & Co.'s business in February, 1875, and died six months later, aged 75, at his residence at Twickenham (August 21). His eldest daughter was the wife of Mr. Lowes Dickinson, the well-known portrait painter; and his youngest daughter, Miss Anna Williams, achieved distinction as a singer."

Smith Williams was the writer of the historic letter which stayed Charlotte Brontë on the weary pilgrimage with her first MS. from one publisher to another. Her coming was fortuitous; her stay was the fruit of George Smith's choice of a reader.

Not only did she become a pillar of the house, but she was the cause of two other famous writers throwing in their lot with Smith, Elder; Thackeray indirectly, for George Smith called upon him in order to gratify Charlotte Brontë's wish to meet her literary idol; Mrs. Gaskell more directly, as the biographer of her friend.

The story of the Brontë friendship may be told in George Smith's own words:—

"In July 1847," he writes, "a parcel containing a MS. reached our office addressed to the firm, but bearing also, scored out, the addresses of two or three other publishing houses; showing that the parcel had been previously submitted to other publishers. This did not tend to prepossess us in favour of the MS. It was clear that we were offered what had been already rejected elsewhere. But it was a rule that every MS. sent to the firm should be faithfully considered.

"The parcel contained the MS. of 'The Professor,' a book which was published after Charlotte Brontë's death. Mr. Williams, the 'reader' to the firm, read the MS. and said that it evinced great literary power, but he had grave doubts as to its being successful as a publication. We together decided that he should write to Currer Bell a letter of appreciative criticism of the MS., declining the work but expressing an opinion that the writer *could* produce a book which would command success. Before, however, this letter was despatched there came a letter from Currer Bell, containing a postage stamp for our reply, it having been hinted to the writer by 'some experienced friend' that publishers often refrain from answering communications unless a postage stamp was furnished for the purpose! Charlotte Brontë herself has described the effect the letter had on her:

"As a forlorn hope he tried one publishing house more. Ere long, in a much shorter space than that on which experience had taught him to calculate, there came a letter, which he opened in the dreary anticipation of finding two hard hopeless lines, intimating that "Messrs. Smith, Elder & Co. were not disposed to publish the MS.," and instead, he took out of the envelope a letter of two pages. He read it trembling. It declined, indeed, to publish that book

for business reasons, but it discussed its merits and demerits ; so courteously, so considerately, in a spirit so rational, with a discrimination so enlightened, that this very refusal cheered the author better than a vulgarly expressed acceptance would have done. It was added, that a work in three volumes would meet with careful attention.' ”

In reply to Mr. Williams's letter came a brief note from Charlotte Brontë expressing grateful appreciation of the attention which had been given to the MS., and saying that the author was on the point of finishing another book which would be sent to us as soon as completed.

“The second MS. was ‘Jane Eyre.’ Here again Currer Bell's suspicion as to the excessive particularity of London publishers on the subject of postage stamps found expression in the letter accompanying the MS. She writes :

“‘I find I cannot prepay the carriage of the parcel, as money for that purpose is not received at the small station where it is left. If, when you acknowledge the receipt of the MS., you would have the goodness to mention the amount charged on delivery, I will immediately transmit it in postage stamps.’

“The MS. of ‘Jane Eyre’ was read by Mr. Williams in due course. He brought it to me on a Saturday and said that he would like me to read it. There were no Saturday half-holidays in those days, and, as was usual, I did not reach home until late. I had made an appointment with a friend for Sunday morning : I was to meet him about 12.30 at a place some two or three miles from our house and ride with him into the country.

“After breakfast on Sunday morning I took the MS. of ‘Jane Eyre’ to the library and began to read it. The story quickly took me captive. At twelve o'clock my horse came to the door, but I could not put the book down. I scribbled two or three lines to my friend, saying I was very sorry circumstances had occurred to prevent my meeting him, sent the note off by my groom, and went on reading the MS. Presently the servant came to tell me that lunch was waiting ; I asked him to bring me a sandwich and a glass of wine and still went on with ‘Jane Eyre.’ Dinner came ; for me the meal was a very hasty

one, and before I went to bed that night I had finished the MS. My literary judgment was perfectly satisfied.

"For my own part I never had much doubt on the subject of the writer's sex; but then I had the advantage over the general public of having the handwriting of the author before me. There were qualities of style, too, and turns of expression, which satisfied me that 'Currer Bell' was a woman, a judgment in which Mr. Williams concurred. We were bound, however, to respect the writer's self-chosen anonymity, and our letters continued to be addressed to 'Currer Bell, Esq.' Her sisters were always referred to in the correspondence as 'Messrs. Ellis and Acton Bell.'

"The works of Ellis and Acton Bell had been published by a Mr. Newby, on terms which rather depleted the too scanty purses of the authors. When we were about to publish 'Shirley'—the work which succeeded 'Jane Eyre'—we endeavoured to make an arrangement with an American publisher to sell him advance sheets of the book, in order to give him an advantage in the matter of time over other American publishers. There was, of course, no copyright with America in those days. We were met during the negotiations by the statement that Mr. Newby had informed them that he was about to publish the next book by the author of 'Jane Eyre'* under her other *nom de plume* of Acton Bell—Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell being in fact one person. We wrote to Currer Bell to say that we should be glad to be in a position to contradict the statement, adding at the same time we were quite sure Mr. Newby's assertion was inaccurate. Charlotte Brontë has related how the letter affected her. She was persuaded that her honour was impugned. 'With rapid decision,' says Mrs. Gaskell in her 'Life of Charlotte Brontë,' 'they resolved that Charlotte and Anne should start for London that very day, in order to prove their separate identity to Messrs. Smith, Elder & Co.'

"With what haste and energy the sisters plunged into what was, for them, a serious expedition, how they reached London at eight o'clock on a Saturday morning, took lodgings at the Chapter Coffee House—in Paternoster Row—and, after an agitated breakfast, set out on a pilgrimage to my office, is told at length in Mrs. Gaskell's 'Life of Charlotte Brontë.'

* Viz. Anne Brontë's novel, "The Tenant of Wildfell Hall." This was in the summer of 1848: "Shirley" appeared in 1849.

“That particular Saturday morning I was at work in my room, when a clerk reported that two ladies wished to see me. I was very busy and sent out to ask their names. The clerk returned to say that the ladies declined to give their names, but wished to see me on a private matter. After a moment’s hesitation I told him to show them in. I was in the midst of my Indian correspondence, and my thoughts were far away from Currer Bell and ‘Jane Eyre.’ Two rather quaintly dressed little ladies, pale-faced and anxious-looking, walked into my room; one of them came forward and presented me with a letter addressed, in my own handwriting, to ‘Currer Bell, Esq.’ I noticed that the letter had been opened, and said with some sharpness, ‘Where did you get this from?’ ‘From the post office,’ was the reply; ‘it was addressed to me. We have both come that you might have ocular proof that there are at least two of us.’ This, then, was Currer Bell in person. I need hardly say that I was at once keenly interested. Mr. Williams was called down and introduced, and I began to plan all sorts of attentions to our visitors. I tried to persuade the ladies to come and stay at our house. This they positively declined to do, but they agreed that I should call with my sister and take them to the Opera in the evening.

“My mother called upon them next day. The sisters had a few days in London during which we paid them every attention, and they returned to Haworth. In what condition of mind and body those few days left them is graphically told by Charlotte Brontë herself:—

““On Tuesday morning we left London, laden with books Mr. Smith had given us, and got safely home. A more jaded wretch than I looked it would be difficult to conceive. I was thin when I went, but I was meagre indeed when I returned, my face looking grey and very old, with strange deep lines ploughed in it—my eyes stared unnaturally. I was weak and yet restless.”

“This is the only occasion on which I saw Anne Brontë. She was a gentle, quiet, rather subdued person, by no means pretty yet of a pleasing appearance. Her manner was curiously expressive of a wish for protection and encouragement, a kind of constant appeal which invited sympathy.

“I must confess that my first impression of Charlotte Brontë’s personal appearance was that it was interesting, rather than



CHAPTER COFFEE HOUSE

From a drawing by Philip Norman, 1899

attractive. She was very small, and had a quaint old-fashioned look. Her head seemed too large for her body. She had fine eyes, but her face was marred by the mouth and complexion. There was little feminine charm about her; and of this fact she herself was uneasily and perpetually conscious. It may seem strange that the possession of genius did not lift her above the weakness of an excessive anxiety about her personal appearance; but I believe that she would have given all her genius and her fame to have been beautiful. Perhaps no woman ever existed who was more anxious to be pretty than she, or was more angrily conscious of the circumstance that she was *not* pretty.

"Charlotte Brontë stayed with us several times. The utmost was, of course, done to entertain and please her. We arranged for dinner-parties, at which artistic and literary notabilities, whom she wished to meet, were present. We took her to places which we thought would interest her—the *Times* office, the Ladies' Gallery in the House of Commons, the General Post Office, the Bank of England, Newgate, Bedlam. Sir David Brewster took her round the Great Exhibition and made it a very interesting visit. One thing which I think impressed her very much was having pointed out to her the lighted rooms of the newspaper offices in Fleet Street and the Strand as we drove home in the middle of the night from some city expedition."

On the first visit to London, Charlotte Brontë dined with the Smiths twice at 4, Westbourne Place. Her immediate impression of George Smith is recorded in her correspondence:—

"He is a firm intelligent man of business, though so young [he was twenty-four]; bent on getting on, and I think desirous of making his way by fair, honourable means. He is enterprising, but likewise cool and cautious. Mr. Smith is a practical man."

After this Charlotte stayed with the Smiths four times: in November 1849, for three weeks; in June 1850, for a fortnight at 76, afterwards 112, Gloucester Terrace; in June 1851, for a month; and finally in January 1853.

Further acquaintance deepened their friendship, and Charlotte, with that habit of ceaseless observation which was sometimes uncomfortably perceptible to her hostesses, gives

us other pen pictures of the man whom she always found "the most spirited and vigilant of publishers." After the first visit in 1849, she wrote to him :—

"Very easy is it to discover that with you to gratify others is to gratify yourself ; to serve others is to afford yourself a pleasure. I suppose you will experience your share of ingratitude and encroachments, but do not let them alter you. Happily they are the less likely to do this because you are half a Scotchman, and therefore must have inherited a fair share of prudence to qualify your generosity, and of caution to protect your benevolence."

And as a personal touch gladly recaptured after the passing of the years, a humorous strain that must have vivified intercourse with him :—

"I will tell you a thing to be noted often in your letters and almost always in your conversation, a psychological thing, and not a matter pertaining to style or intellect—I mean an under-current of quiet raillery, an inaudible laugh to yourself, a not unkindly somewhat subtle playing on your correspondent or companion for the time being—in short, a sly touch of a Mephistopheles, with the fiend extracted."

It was the first of these four visits that brought about George Smith's personal acquaintance with Thackeray. Thackeray was Charlotte's literary idol ; she longed to meet him, and to gratify her wish, George Smith boldly called upon him and asked him to dinner.

The second visit saw the famous return-party at the Thackerays', amusingly described by his daughter, when the shy and chilly aloofness of the chief guest refrigerated the whole assembly ; the lions did not roar, and the host himself slipped away, mute and inglorious, from the scene.

This visit also was the occasion of the first of those frequent and delicately chosen gifts with which George Smith loved to gratify his authors. He made Charlotte sit for her portrait to George Richmond, and sent the drawing to her father together with an

engraving of the Duke of Wellington, who was the Brontës' especial hero. Another gift celebrated the last visit in 1853, its safe arrival at Haworth being acknowledged by her in a letter of February 6, 1853; an engraving after the portrait of Thackeray by Samuel Laurence (the second from his hand), at sight of which she exclaimed, "And so a lion came out of Judah." Thackeray, being told of this, remarked, "I never could see the lion." Half a century later these two pictures, the Wellington and the Thackeray, were sent to Reginald Smith by Mrs. Nicholls.

It was on this last visit also that George Smith took her to hear Thackeray lecture on the English Humorists.

During these visits both mother and son made a very strong impression on Charlotte Brontë, and in writing "*Villette*," the MS. of which was sent to the firm in November 1852, she not only introduced scenes based on episodes of her visits, but she drew an admiring portrait of George Smith in Dr. John, and of his mother in Mrs. Bretton; "several of her expressions are given literally verbatim," remarks the publisher. Charlotte herself was a little alarmed at her own daring; as she wrote to Mrs. Gaskell, "I was kept waiting longer than usual for Mr. Smith's opinion of the book, and I was rather uneasy, for I was afraid he had found me out, and was offended."

The treatment of the unknown Currer Bell by the firm, the discriminating letter of refusal which led to the triumph of "*Jane Eyre*" as related in Mrs. Gaskell's "*Life of Charlotte Brontë*," made a great impression on the reading and writing public. The avenues to the literary world are thronged by potential Charlotte Brontës. MSS. would frequently be sent to Smith, Elder on the strength of the famous episode, with the expressed certitude that they would meet with no less generous treatment. Confident appeals of this kind continued to the end of the firm's existence.

"*Jane Eyre*" was instantly acclaimed by the reviewers.

Among the Smith-Elder papers are preserved reviews of the *Critic*, *Tablet*, *New Monthly Magazine*, *Morning Post*, *Sun*, *Spectator*, *People's Journal*, and *British Quarterly*. As the latter puts it, "Everybody has been praising 'Jane Eyre,' and for once everybody has been in the right."

The *Critic* is delighted to find its critical acumen justified, for it was one of the rare journals to appreciate the promise with which the Poems of the three brothers Bell were freighted. Currer Bell justifies these anticipations; he can write prose as well as poetry. The *Atlas*, which finds it the most extraordinary production that has issued from the press for years, knows no author who possesses such power as is exhibited in these three volumes. "We do not know who Currer Bell might be, but his name will stand very high in literature. We were tempted more than once to believe that Mrs. Marsh was veiling herself under an assumed editorship, for this autobiography partakes greatly of her simple, penetrating style, and, at times, of her love of nature; but a man's more vigorous hand is, we think, perceptible."

In the following years, poor Charlotte Brontë was considered to have been terribly daring, not to say positively immoral, in writing "Jane Eyre"; as G. H. Lewes infelicitously remarked on first meeting her at the Smiths', "There ought to be a bond of sympathy between us, Miss Brontë, for we have both written naughty books." And Lady Herschel, having found "Jane Eyre" on Mrs. Smith's drawing-room table, said to her, "Do you leave such a book as *this* about, at the risk of your daughters reading it?" Lady Eastlake, reviewing it in the *Quarterly*, brutally remarked that if it were written by a woman it must be by one who had forfeited the right to the society of her sex. Charlotte, entirely innocent of offence, was no less surprised than affronted. However, the strict unbending *Tablet*, after declaring that the thread of the story is strung with pearls—pearls of thought and sentiment, and it winds round the reason and

the affections—exclaims, “The reading of such a book as this is a healthful exercise, and we sincerely hope may prove as attractive as it must be profitable.”

It is strange that twenty years after her death, the history of Charlotte Brontë was unknown to a French admirer of her work. A letter exists, dated November 1875, from the Marquis de Fraysseix, lieutenant de vaisseau, originally addressed to “Monsieur Currer Bell (author of ‘Jane Eyre’), care of John Murray, Esq., Albemarle Street.” Strange again that the writer had not taken the trouble to read the imprint of the book. In this letter the Marquis states that he had composed a play in five acts on “votre magnifique roman, ‘Jane Eyre,’” and begs permission to offer it to the Porte St. Martin Theatre for representation, at the same time asking for the author’s collaboration. James Payn’s reply is not extant, but it must have been written with mixed feelings.

In conclusion, it may be recorded that the Brontë MSS. are destined to go finally to the British Museum. The letter which was sent to the Firm with the MS. of “Jane Eyre” was given by George Murray Smith to the Red Cross sale in 1917.

CHAPTER VIII

FOUR FRIENDS—(iii) WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY

THE growth of the friendship with Thackeray is told as follows by George Smith in his *Reminiscences* :—

“ I have a vivid recollection of the first time I ever heard of Thackeray or his writings some fifty years ago. It was the custom of publishers and of large dealers in ‘ remainders ’ (a term for unsold stock bought at a very reduced price from the original publisher) to have what were called ‘ coffee-house sales.’ A publisher would invite the booksellers to dinner at an early hour—three or four o’clock in the afternoon—and after dinner he, or an auctioneer acting on his behalf, offered his books one after another from a printed list at a lower price than that at which they were usually sold to the trade. Orders were taken in the room, and each bookseller—even if he were not a buyer—entered the price of the work on his catalogue with the names of the larger purchasers, as a guide to the sources whence he might afterwards supply his demands.

“ Shortly after my appearance at Cornhill, and while I was still very young, I was sent to represent the firm at Messrs. Tegg & Son’s coffee-house sale, with instructions to mark my catalogue. This I did conscientiously, until Mr. Thackeray’s ‘ Paris Sketch-Book ’ was handed round.* When the copy reached me I opened it, and my eyes fell on the sketch of Mr. Deuceace. I commenced to read and I was fascinated ! I forgot the scene around me. I read on till the end of the sale, and then awoke to the fact that my catalogue was unmarked. I asked Mr. Tegg if I might have a copy of the book for the price at which it had been offered to the trade. Its original retail price had been a guinea : the price at which it was offered was 1s. 9d. My joy at the possession of this treasure was chastened

* The date was probably about 1842, as the book was published in 1840.

by the thought of how I should face my father with my unmarked catalogue ; but I persuaded a good-natured confrère to lend me his list, and I copied his prices on to mine before I went to bed that night. I still preserve the book which first introduced me to the writings of Thackeray, whose name I had never heard till it fell from the lips of the auctioneer in that coffee-house sale. I fondly—though perhaps not quite accurately—believe I then resolved if ever I became a publisher I would publish the works of that writer. ✓

“ Some years afterwards, when I had secured the services of Mr. Williams as my ‘ reader ’ and manager of the publishing department, I talked to him of Thackeray, and asked if he had any acquaintance with him. It turned out that he had a slight acquaintance, and I asked him to go to Mr. Thackeray and say simply that, if ever he was in need of a publisher, I was his man on his own terms. Nothing came of the message. I remember, long afterwards, when on intimate terms of friendship with Thackeray, saying to him : ‘ When you wanted a publisher for “ Vanity Fair,” why did you not come to me ? I dare say you don’t remember the circumstance, but I sent Mr Williams to you to ask for your books long before you were famous.’ Thackeray turned to me with one of his charming smiles and said : ‘ My good young friend, you should have come yourself ! ’ I was ashamed to tell him that this was only one of a thousand instances in which I had suffered from my constitutional shyness. ✓

“ The first time I saw Thackeray was when I called upon him to ask if he would come to dinner to meet the author of ‘ Jane Eyre,’ who was staying with my mother. Charlotte Brontë was devoured with curiosity to meet Thackeray, to whom she had dedicated the second edition of her book. I told Thackeray there would be no one with us excepting Sir John Forbes,* and explained that Miss Brontë was incognita in London, and begged him not to say a word to indicate his knowledge of her identity as the authoress of ‘ Jane Eyre.’ He replied in his large way : ‘ I see ! It will be all right : you are speaking to a man of the world.’

“ But unhappily it was not all right. When the ladies had left the dining-room I offered Thackeray a cigar. The custom of smoking after dinner was not common then, but I had been

* See Ch. I, p. 2.

told he liked a cigar, and so provided for his tastes. To my dismay, when we rejoined the ladies in the drawing-room, he approached Miss Brontë and quoted a familiar and much-criticised passage from 'Jane Eyre.' It was that in which she describes 'the warning fragrance' which told of the approach of Mr. Rochester :

" 'Sweetbriar and southern wood, jasmine, pink and rose, had long been yielding their evening sacrifice of incense. This new scent was neither of shrub nor flower. It was—I knew it well—it was Mr. Rochester's cigar !'

" The quotation, in one sense, was happy enough, and it did credit to Thackeray's memory of 'Jane Eyre' ; but not to his memory of his agreement with me. Miss Brontë's face showed her discomposure, and in a chilly fashion she turned off the allusion. But I was almost as much discomposed as Miss Brontë by this sudden assault on what she was so anxious to guard—her identity as the authoress of 'Jane Eyre.' She cast an accusing look at me.

" Thackeray, however, had no sense of either awkwardness or guilt. From my house he went to the smoking-room of the Garrick Club and said : 'Boys ! I have been dining with "Jane Eyre" !' To have her identity expounded in the smoking-room of the Garrick Club was the last experience which the morbidly shy and sensitive little lady would have chosen.

" My first direct business connection with Thackeray was the publication of 'The Kickleburys on the Rhine.' I came down rather late one morning to breakfast, and my mother told me that, while she was standing at the open window of the dining-room, Mr. Thackeray rode up on his cob. He called out 'Good morning' across the pavement, and asked : 'Is your son in ?' 'I told him,' said my mother, 'that you were not in bed till four o'clock this morning and so had not come down yet. Thackeray said "O-h-h" in a quizzical tone, and made such a funny face that I could not help laughing. I hastened to explain that you had been very hard at work in the City till late in the morning, on the Indian Mail. He seemed to accept my explanation, but I rather doubt if he believed it. He went on to say, "I want to ask him if he would publish a book for me ?" I told him I was sure you would, and that, if he was going home, I had no doubt you would come round to his house in an hour.'

"I was eager to publish for Thackeray; and, after I had hastily breakfasted, went to his house in Young Street, Kensington. Thackeray explained that his last Christmas book, 'Rebecca and Rowena,' had not been successful, and, as a result, Chapman & Hall could not see their way to paying him his price for the next book. He mentioned the sum, and I asked if I might write a cheque for it? The business was thus promptly settled, very much to my satisfaction, and, I think, to that of Thackeray himself. 'The Kickleburys on the Rhine' proved a successful venture. An edition of 3,000 copies was published at Xmas 1850. A second edition speedily followed.

"*The Times* published a somewhat severe critique on the book, and Thackeray wrote, as a preface to the second edition, 'Thunder and Small Beer.' He read the preface to me, and I persuaded him to make some alterations in it in the direction of mildness; and, in its modified form, it still keeps its place as a preface to the second edition of the Kickleburys. A letter from the publisher to the author forms part of this preface, and Thackeray's comment on the letter was amusing: 'Good Lord!' he said, 'if every author had such a letter from his publisher what would he care about a review in *The Times*?'"

"I afterwards published 'Esmond' for Thackeray. He had mentioned the work to me and I had expressed my anxiety to publish it. 'But I shall want four figures for it,' said Thackeray. This proved no obstacle, and the price paid for the first edition (2,500 copies) and subsequent half profits was £1,200."

Miss Thackeray (Lady Ritchie) has given us Thackeray's own version of this incident:—

"One day my father came in, in great excitement. 'There's a young fellow just come,' said he; 'he has brought a thousand pounds in his pocket. He has made me an offer for my book, it's the most spirited, handsome offer, I scarcely like to take him at his word; he's hardly more than a boy, his name is George Smith: he is waiting there now, and I must go back;' and then, after walking once up and down the room, my father went away, and for the first time, a life-time ago, I heard the name of this good friend-to-be."

To continue the Reminiscences :—

“ An incident connected with this publication may be mentioned as showing Mr. Thackeray’s scrupulous dealings in matters of business. Part of the arrangement was that he should receive a certain sum—I think £600—on account, and that the MS. should be delivered on a certain date. Before that date arrived he called at my mother’s house in Gloucester Terrace and gave her my cheque, which he had not paid into his bankers, asking her to tell me that, as he found he could not finish the book by the time he had promised, he thought he ought to return my cheque. I took it back to him and persuaded him, with some difficulty, to retain it, trying to express my sense of his punctiliousness ; to which, I told him, publishers were not accustomed on the part of authors. In all my business transactions with Thackeray, he evinced the most scrupulous delicacy, and if, as sometimes happened, it was convenient for him to receive payment in advance, he never seemed quite happy until the accounts were balanced. After his death, there was found in his desk a slip of paper which supplies an odd proof of this trait in his character. On it were written the words :—

“ ‘ I.O. S.E. & Co., 35 pp.’ ”

(*i.e.* pages of the *Cornhill* still to be written).

Trollope, it will be remembered, declared “ *Esmond* ” to be the greatest novel in the English language. “ There are in it,” he says, “ a few scenes so told that even Scott has never equalled the telling.” Thackeray himself would probably have chosen to be judged by “ *Esmond* ” rather than by any other of his works. Fields, in his “ *Yesterdays with Authors*,” says :—

“ If I could possess only *one* of his works, I think I should choose ‘ *Henry Esmond*.’ To my thinking, it is a marvel in literature, and I have read it oftener than any of the other works. Perhaps the reason of my partiality lies somewhat in this little incident. One day, in the snowy winter of 1852, I met Thackeray sturdily ploughing his way down Beacon Street with a copy of ‘ *Henry Esmond* ’ (the English edition, then just issued) under his arm. Seeing me some way off, he held aloft the volumes and

began to shout in great glee. When I came up to him he cried out, 'Here is the *very* best I can do, and I am carrying it to Prescott as a reward of merit for having given me my first dinner in America. I stand by this book, and am willing to leave it, when I go, as my card.' "

"Esmond" was published in 1852, the first of Thackeray's novels to appear in the regular three-volume form. Just before the book appeared, Thackeray was getting ready to start for his lecturing tour in the United States. George Smith, with his happy way of conferring an appropriate gift on a friend, commissioned Samuel Laurence to draw his portrait, so that a first-rate presentment of him might be left with his daughters while he was away.

Before he returned from America, George Smith published his "Lectures on the English Humorists," with the addition of elaborate notes by James Hannay, Thackeray's friend, and afterwards a frequent contributor to the *Cornhill*, "in order to make the volume of more presentable size." In December 1854, Smith, Elder published "The Rose and the Ring." These books mark the growth of the Thackeray alliance, afterwards to be so complete.

But from 1853 to 1859 Thackeray continued to publish with Bradbury & Evans also, with whom he was connected through *Punch*, bringing out, with them, "The Newcomes," four volumes of Miscellaneous Writings, and "The Virginians."

"Thackeray's characteristics as Editor are recorded in the chapter on the *Cornhill Magazine*," continues George Smith. "When that magazine proved a great success, and I felt that its editor ought to share in that success, I accordingly told Thackeray that I proposed to send him a cheque for double the payment that had been agreed upon for the editorship. This was so totally unexpected by Thackeray that, for a moment, he lost his balance. His lips quivered, and then he broke into tears. This was an experience, he said, to which he was not accustomed. A touch of kindness, however, would always melt Thackeray."

Our friendship became very close and unrestrained. Thackeray was not a good business manager of his own affairs, and would confide to me his difficulties. 'Well,' I would say to him jestingly, 'you know a bank whereon the wild thyme grows.' But his self-respect was too keen to permit him to lean too much on others. His mode of suggesting to me that a cheque would be convenient was characteristic. He would walk into my room in Pall Mall with both his trouser pockets turned inside out, a silent and expressive proof of their emptiness. I used to take out my cheque-book and look at him enquiringly. He mentioned the sum required and the transaction was completed."

CHAPTER IX

FOUR FRIENDS—(iv) MRS. GASKELL

As has been noted earlier, George Smith's long friendship with Mrs. Gaskell, like the friendship with Thackeray, owed its starting-point to Charlotte Brontë, whose *Life* she was writing at Mr. Brontë's request.

From their first meeting, a close friendship sprang up, marked by a full and frank interchange of letters, in which business is tempered by a frequent personal and humorous touch. In October 1855, George Smith supplies his share of material for the Brontë *Life*, and in the following June, takes Mrs. Gaskell to the famous Chapter Coffee House, where Charlotte and Anne had stayed on their first flying visit to London.

Their correspondence gives a full account of Mrs. Gaskell's visit to Mr. Brontë and Mr. Nicholls at Haworth, under the dominating escort of Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth, who would take no denial in the matter of papers and portraits required for the *Life*; of the interesting material found there, "The Professor," the fragmentary "Emma," the little paper books in "indescribably fine writing," as she wrote to George Smith, "the wildest and most incoherent things—purporting to be written (by) or addressed to some member of the Wellesley family. They give one the idea of creative power carried to the verge of insanity"—indeed with a curious resemblance to some of Blake's MSS.

"The Professor," it will be remembered, had been rejected by Smith Williams, but it was resolved, in the light of Charlotte's subsequent achievement, to publish the book posthumously. Asked to "fix a mercantile value" on the MS. Mrs. Gaskell confesses her inability to do so, but thinks that payment should

be proportional to the payments for the previous books, saying, "What she received for them I do not know, but I do know—for she often expressed it to me—the full confidence she always placed in you in such matters." Mrs. Gaskell is most disturbed as regards the editing of the book by Mr. Nicholls, who was sure to leave in many non-essential touches which would have been removed by the taste of George Smith or herself; above all, lest anything that appeared should "fall on the 'raw'" of M. Héger, whose confidence she had received, or should lead to the publication of certain letters from him.

Then Mrs. Gaskell submits part of the still uncorrected and unpolished MS. of her Memoir for George Smith and Smith Williams to read, not as publishers, but as Charlotte Brontë's friends to give their opinion on it. In the draft she could not write freely without writing fully of Mr. Brontë's "wild peculiarity" and his influence on the girls' home atmosphere; much of this could not be published in his lifetime, yet could not be wholly omitted. She tells of her efforts to steer clear of giving offence no less than of having to submit her selections from the letters to the possibility of arbitrary prohibition by Mr. Nicholls, who would have preferred to burn all the letters. "Oh!" she exclaims, "if once I have finished this biography, catch me writing another! I shall be heaved overboard at last, like the ass belonging to the old man in the fable."

In October 1856, she expects the *Life* to be completed by February 7, and plans to go abroad for a month from mid-March so as to escape those depressing reviews, supercilious or personal or impertinently flattering, which would make her doubly sore, feeling that she had done Charlotte Brontë an injury.

"Please to remember," she writes, "I am just the reverse of Miss Brontë. I never want to see or hear of any reviews. When I have done with a book I want to shake off the recollection thereof for ever. Besides I do not like reviewing as it is carried on in England."

This plan she was enabled to carry out through George Smith's liberality. She desired to sell her Memoir outright—on the other hand, her husband always preferred her retaining the copyright of her works—for, as she said, it was a method less open to misunderstanding than the other, and “short agreements make long friends.”

To obviate any chance of subsequent dissatisfaction, George Smith promptly offered her £200 more than the £600 originally proposed, and this was gladly accepted.

Finally he bettered his agreement by paying her a considerable sum in advance of publication, so that she was free to go abroad before the book came out in March.

The last words of the letter just cited are ominous. “Do you mind the law of libel? I have three people I want to libel : . . . (that bad woman who corrupted Branwell Brontë), Mr. Newby and Lady Eastlake,* the first and last not to be mentioned by name. The mean publisher to be gibbeted.”

The publisher *did* fear the law of libel ; apart from personal considerations an injunction would stop the sale of the book. Accordingly this letter and perusal of the MS. brought a prudent remonstrance from him. She agreed that it might be wiser not to indicate so clearly the lady supposed to be concerned in Branwell's undoing, though she was not aware that she had made the indication so clear, and she begged George Smith to point out the passage where he was particularly struck by it. But she firmly maintained that it was her “duty” in dealing with Branwell's character and condition of mind to expose the woman who had ruined him, using a statement explicitly made to her by Charlotte Brontë. The words in the draft about Newby were not meant to stand, but to be altered by the prudent publisher into a non-actionable form. But she adds, “Do let me abuse Mr. Newby as much as I dare, *within the law*.”

Thus in the end she laid herself open to lively attack. On

* Lady Eastlake reviewed “Jane Eyre” bitterly in the *Quarterly*.

seeing the book, Miss Mary Taylor, Miss Nussey's friend, noted that the characteristics of the Brontë menkind had been exceedingly softened, but prophetically remarked, "Does Mrs. Gaskell know what a nest of hornets she is pulling about her ears?" She was to learn all too soon; so that by the end of the year, when there was a final outburst of controversy between Miss Martineau and old Mr. Brontë, she was to write, "I do not think there ever was such an apple of discord as that unlucky book." As soon as it was published, protests poured in, now from the owner of Cowan Bridge School, now from the very servants who were offended by the remark that "there was plenty and even waste in the house." Worst of all, a libel action was threatened on behalf of the lady concerned with Branwell.

Now Mrs. Gaskell having gone abroad to avoid the reviews, had, as her custom was, made assurance doubly sure by leaving no address. Her stay in Rome * was untroubled; her first budget of vaguely disquieting news only met her at Paris on her way home on May 25.

As there were no means of communicating with her, and her husband was not in a position to assume responsibility, George Smith had to act on his own judgment. The sequel is best told in his own words.

"Mrs. Gaskell's solicitor and my own had a conference, and it was determined to employ detectives in order to ascertain what evidence was available to justify the alleged libel. Much gossip, it was found, existed, but it was gossip of the kind which is apt to dissolve into mere vapour when tested in a court of law. . . . In the end, and after infinite trouble, we decided to withdraw the edition, destroy all existing copies of the book and publish a new edition without the libel." [At the same time a retractation was made in the *Times*.]

"Before Mrs. Gaskell returned to England the whole business was settled in the manner I have described. On her arrival she

* It was then she was the guest of W. W. Story, the American sculptor.

expressed content with what had been done, but one matter, it seemed, grieved her. She wrote me a letter of reproach, mildly and graciously expressed. 'With all my experience'—which by the way, was only about half her own—she wrote, 'I must have realized from the first the dangerous character of the passages which had brought on us all this trouble. Why,' she asked, 'had I not cautioned her that in writing them she was straying into the realms of libel?' I had of course done this very thing. I had taken so much pains, indeed, with my letter on the subject, that, having made some alterations in the first draft, I had rewritten it, and still had the original draft by me. I put on the table before me side by side Mrs. Gaskell's letter reproaching me for *not* having written a letter of warning to her, and the draft of the very letter I had written conveying that warning. Mrs. Gaskell's memory, it was clear, had served her ill. Human nature urged me to send her my draft, and prove that her reproach was undeserved. It is always pleasant to be able to say to some one else, 'I told you so!' But I resisted the temptation. I liked Mrs. Gaskell very much indeed, and I knew that the receipt of the original draft of my letter, while it would prove me to be right, would give her keen discomfort. I simply made the best excuse I could, expressed my regret and took my scolding, in short, 'lying down.' The draft which would have exonerated me was allowed to slumber harmlessly in its drawer.

"I have some reason to suppose that Mrs. Gaskell afterwards found my letter, or remembered it, and that she appreciated my self-denial. It came to me in this way. When the *Pall Mall Gazette* was started I was keen, in its interests, for the best and latest information everywhere, and spared no trouble or cost to secure it. A publication called 'Le Propos de Labiénus' had appeared in Paris and had been seized within two hours of its appearance by the police. It was very difficult to get a copy; yet, in the interests of the *Pall Mall*, I was eager to secure one. Mrs. Gaskell at the time was staying in Paris with Madame Mohl, a well-known lady, who moved in the inner circle of literary and political society. I wrote to Mrs. Gaskell asking if she could get me a copy of the suppressed pamphlet. Almost before Mrs. Gaskell could have received my letter, a friend in London brought me a copy of that very pamphlet, which had been sent to him direct from Paris. Mrs. Gaskell's reply came quickly;

and, though I am not much given to the melting mood, it fairly moistened my eyes. It consisted of several packets of closely written MS. sent by letter post. Accompanying these was a note from Mrs. Gaskell giving me their history. She could not, she explained, send me the actual pamphlet; but she had succeeded in borrowing a copy, and, after returning from a dinner-party with the book in her hand, she had sat up all night making a transcript of its contents. The MS., which I still possess, represents one of the kindest things that has ever been done to me.

"When I opened the packets and read Mrs. Gaskell's letter I thought of the note from me which was already on its way to her, saying curtly, 'Please do not take any trouble about that book, because I have got a copy of it.' But Mrs. Gaskell had already expended extraordinary 'trouble' in fulfilling my request, and she would now learn that all her toil and self-denial represented mere waste. I think any man of sensibility will understand how I felt on the whole subject.

"Some weeks afterwards Mrs. Gaskell came to stay with us; and, while walking up and down the terrace at Hampstead with her, smoking my cigar, I said to her, 'I think you did the kindest thing any woman did for a man when you sat up all night in Paris copying that book for me.' 'Well,' she said, 'you know I owed you something, for you once showed extraordinary consideration for me.' I replied, 'I really don't know what you mean.' 'I think,' she answered, 'if you search your memory you will know.' That was all that passed, and I can only guess that Mrs. Gaskell was thinking of that letter which she reproached me with *not* having sent, and the meekness with which I had endured the accusation!"

Mrs. Gaskell set to work to prepare a new edition that should settle the complaints, and, as she put it, make up to George Smith, so far as possible, for all the annoyance he had undergone. Many of the complaints were purely ridiculous; in other cases, such as that of Cowan Bridge School, she could even have justified her censures by the testimony of others who were ready to give their names at whatever personal disadvantage to themselves.

But she would not write a preface of self-defence ; new matter could take the place of the omissions ; the main thing was to prune away the words that gave offence, justifiably or unjustifiably. The process was tiresome, and at last, as yet another trifling excision is demanded, she exclaimed resignedly, " It is ' anything for a quiet life ' with me just now. So if anybody objects to anything I am ready to take it out, and leave the Memoir as ' wersh and fushionless ' as need be."

The new edition happily was approved, even by those who had complained loudly before. Not least pleasant was a further payment from George Smith where she had imagined that her work was merely the repair of her previous mistake.

" I do not think," she writes, " I was ever more surprised than by the contents of your letter this morning. I had always felt that you had behaved to me most liberally in the first instance and that in some respects, the book must have been a great source of annoyance and vexation to you ; it was only the other day that I expressed my sense of your good and kind behaviour, under mortification and disappointment caused by me, to Mrs. Clive ; and now to receive a cheque for £200 ! I am most sincerely and heartily obliged to you for it. As *money* it is very acceptable just now, but I am even more touched by the kindness and liberality which will always make me feel beholden to you."

Mrs. Gaskell's correspondence, always spontaneous and fresh, now playful, now touching private and personal matters as well as business, is a delightful testimony to the real friendship it betokens ; but the chronicler keeps to the business side, which shows her entire confidence in the man " who has been a kind friend to her in her bad scrapes " and in his judgment of the commercial value, be it large or small, which he could place either on the cheap editions of her previously published stories or on her new ones. She wrote by preference for him and the *Cornhill* rather than for any other publisher or Editor, even her old friend Charles Dickens, however tempting the offers made for

stories of lesser quality than she would like to send to the *Cornhill*. Thus, having two pieces of work on hand for George Smith, she was asked to write a one-volume story for another editor. Before accepting any extraneous offer, she bids George Smith tell her frankly what dates would best suit him for the work she had already promised him. "Be true," she wrote, "that's all ; I can stand snubbing, and being sat upon, when I like, and respect, the snubber. . . . But please *mind this*. I would far rather do what suited you, if any one action of mine did more than another, than do anything for any one else in the writing world."

George Smith, eager to publish all her work, promptly proposed to take over the one-volume story and on better terms, only to learn that this was a blunder. She did not want, and what is more, she would not take, a penny more advantageous terms than the first offer. "So there ! and there's an end of that part of the subject."

This was in 1857 ; similarly in 1865 when a large inclusive offer was made for the entire rights of her next book, she frankly laid it before George Smith, saying that if he were willing to pay at his former rate, she would far rather have that from him than the larger sum from the other firm. "Remember," she insisted, "I mean literally what I say. I have thought that telling you the simple truth was really the most friendly and delicate—in reality—action."

A charming piece of badinage is her refusal to name her own price for "A Night's Work," which she was writing for the *Cornhill*. Her daughter writes for her to say she "would much rather not fill up a cheque for herself : for never having had such an opportunity she knows that she should put in £100,000, or something of that sort, and that you would be too gentlemanly to demur, and when you moved to a smaller house and began to retrench she should not feel quite comfortable. She also wishes *you* would not fix the price until you have read 'A Night's Work.'"

Another that may be quoted is from a letter of December 1859. "I wrote the 'Garden Room Story.'* If people thought for a moment it was George Eliot's it was because of the preference for small cows over Shorthorns."

One judgment on her own books may be recorded; she confided to George Smith, "I like 'Cranford' better than anything I have written; it is the only one I can read again."

A letter of 1864, just before the publication of "Wives and Daughters" began in the *Cornhill*, displays her literary sensitiveness towards her audience. She begs that her name should not be advertised as the author of the new serial, not merely for her own sake but because she always feels the greatest difference between writing under her own name and anonymously. Writing under her own name she feels so completely 'en évidence' and hampered that the story suffers. And if she were known as the author, then after each number she would be subjected to criticisms, suggestions, and questions, which would perplex and shackle her in her work just as much as the remarks of visitors, during the progress of a picture, distort and weaken the original conception of an artist.

An amusing note is her identification of the still unknown George Eliot of the "Scenes of Clerical Life." Advising George Smith to read these, which had first appeared in *Blackwood*, she writes:—

"I am *delighted* with them; and very proud of having discovered their merits very early in the day. I have poked about to find out who the author is, and find that he is the son of a baker at Nuneaton, Warwickshire."

On Mrs. Gaskell's death in 1865, the link with her family continued unbroken; and the hereditary friendship with her daughters was warmly continued by his successor Reginald Smith.

* "The Ghost in the Garden Room" appeared in the Christmas number of *All The Year Round* for 1859. It is reprinted in the Collected Works of Mrs. Gaskell under the title of "The Crooked Branch."

CHAPTER X

PARTNERSHIP WITH H. S. KING—MARRIAGE—NEWSPAPER VENTURES

THE year 1853 was another pivotal point alike in the history of Smith, Elder and in the personal career of George Smith. Seven years of heavy strain and undivided responsibilities had told upon his health. It was time to take a partner into the business, and he found an able collaborator in Henry Samuel King, a bookseller of Brighton, whose bookshop is still carried on there by Treacher & Co. H. S. King took part in the general supervision of the business and received a quarter-share of the profits. The partnership lasted to the end of the year 1868. George Smith felt that it fettered his independence in some degree, but it lightened his labours and left him free to develop other business enterprises.

The other change which brought a new fulness and felicity to his whole life was his engagement to Miss Elizabeth Blakeway, the daughter of John Blakeway, a wine merchant of London, and granddaughter of Edward Blakeway, of Broseley Hall, Shropshire, to whom he was married on February 11, 1854. Her gifts of mind and character were no less gracious than her outward presence. Her portrait was painted by Sir Frederick Burton, one of his most perfect "works." "You and I," he wrote, "will hand each other down to posterity." Husband and wife found a common inspiration for their lives in high-mindedness and mutual devotion. She shared in his bold plans, in his sanguine hopes, undefeated by the occasional ebb of fortune which was ultimately to swell in full flood, and at the last, she received from him as his special legacy, his most cherished enterprise—the

"Dictionary of National Biography." There were two sons and three daughters of the marriage.

His elder son, George Murray Smith (d. 1919), aided his father in the business for nine years before 1890; and for nine years after that, the younger son, Alexander Murray Smith, was an active partner in the firm. His eldest daughter, in 1878, married Henry Yates Thompson, to whom Smith gave the *Pall Mall Gazette*; his second daughter did not marry and remained with her parents until their deaths; his youngest daughter married, in 1893, Reginald John Smith, who joined the firm in 1894, and from 1899 was sole active partner and finally sole representative of the firm.

As George Smith had given his mother's name of Murray to all his children, he afterwards found it convenient to bring his own signature into line with theirs, and from 1873 onwards, used to sign himself as George M. Smith.

Mrs. Smith survived her husband thirteen years, reaching the age of eighty-three in 1914. To the last her unfailing interest in the firm's doings and her steadfast maintenance of old friendships formed a vivid link between the past and the present.

In 1855 a new departure in publishing was made by the production of a newspaper. This had long been one of George Smith's ambitions, which was to express itself in four schemes or actual ventures before its complete realization in the *Pall Mall Gazette*.

In 1854, Thackeray had suggested to him the idea of a daily sheet of general criticism after the fashion of Addison and Steele's *Spectator* and *Tatler*, Thackeray himself playing the part of editor. It was to be called *Fair Play*, and dealing with literature as well as daily affairs, was to act up to its name in the frankness and honesty of its criticisms. It was to be non-partisan; it was to try all parties and policies by the test of honesty and good sense, and was to carry that spirit into the realms of literature

and criticism, waging relentless war upon the jobbery then existing in both. The ideals of *Fair Play* took shape partly in Thackeray's own "Roundabout Papers," partly, when the time came, in the fresh and frank treatment of current affairs in the *Pall Mall Gazette*.

George Smith entered eagerly into the scheme, but finally Thackeray shrank from the responsibilities of editorship, and it fell through. Nevertheless, the discussion prepared the way for the inception of the *Cornhill* five years later.

Before the scheme was finally dropped, the firm established, in connection with their Indian business, a newspaper of more prosaic type, which was to convey home news to dwellers in India, under the appropriate title of *The Overland Mail*. It was edited by Mr. (afterwards Sir) John William Kaye, the distinguished Indian military historian, for whom Smith, Elder had already acted as publishers, and whose name will reappear as an early contributor to the *Cornhill*.

Next year, to complete the balance by bringing Indian news to English readers, *The Homeward Mail* was established, under the editorship of E. B. Eastwick, the Orientalist, for whom also Smith, Elder had published.

These two papers were very successful in fulfilling their function, and still continue, though they have passed into other hands.

Extraneous projects for running a periodical were brought before Smith, Elder every now and again, but never taken up. One of the most remarkable came, in 1868, from W. H. Kingston, the writer of boys' books, who was eager to start a boys' magazine containing tales of high character and sound Protestant principles, showing the youth of England the dangers of Popery.

The increase in the amount of printing to be done made it advisable for the firm to set up a printing office of their own. Premises were taken at 15, Old Bailey—Green Arbour Court—

and in addition to the *Mail*, some of Smith, Elder's general literary work was printed here.

After the separation of 1869, when H. S. King took over the Indian business and George Smith only kept the publishing business, the economic advantage of this grew less, and the supervision of a separate department had its own drawbacks. When in 1872 the London, Chatham and Dover Railway wished to acquire part of the premises, opportunity came to make fresh arrangements. In the October of that year, George Smith sold the premises at a valuation to Messrs. Spottiswoode, the well-known printers, the purchase money being paid off by the charges, on an agreed scale, for the printing of books for Smith, Elder & Co. Possession was arranged for January 1, 1873.

Leaving the strict sequence of date, a brief account may be given here of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, so far as it concerned the firm, for the connection between them was but brief.

The success of the *Cornhill*, an account of which follows, paved the way to the *Pall Mall Gazette*. The first five years of its triumphant progress had brought George Smith into intimate acquaintance with a number of brilliant writers who were ready, as well as able, to help; notable among these were Matthew Higgins ("Jacob Omnium"), Fitzjames Stephen, W. R. Greg, R. H. Hutton, G. H. Lewes, so that, the scheme once prepared, there was no difficulty on the literary side.

The actual impulse came from Frederick Greenwood. He had been a contributor to the *Cornhill* from its second number ("An Essay without an End"), and after Thackeray's resignation, was one of the committee who edited the magazine, and then for a time sole editor. The need for an honest and courageous daily paper was still to the fore when, in 1862, Greenwood proposed that Smith should purchase *The Queen*, which was hampered for want of capital, and that Greenwood, who was then managing it, should become editor. But the *Queen* was not the type of newspaper that George Smith wanted.

Some time afterwards, Greenwood made a new proposal, backed by careful estimates. This was for the production of a small evening newspaper of about twelve pages. Carefully as these estimates had been drawn up, actual experience was to prove that many of the items were much below the actual expenditure, an example, remarks George Smith, "showing how widely the 'estimate,' of even an expert, is apt to differ from the actual facts of newspaper enterprise."

As regards the name of the paper, George Smith records:—

"I was at first in favour of using the old title *Fair Play*, but we came at last to feel that this was somewhat too 'bumptious.' We must not proclaim our own virtue every time the paper was issued in the very syllables of its title. I think it was I, again, who, from the well-known passage in Thackeray's 'Pendennis,' took the suggestion of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, and that title was, in an indefinite sort of way, allowed to stand. It was finally and definitely settled as the result of a conversation with Annie Thackeray. After dinner one evening, in our house at Brighton, I told her of the plans for our new journal, and said, 'I am thinking of calling it the *Pall Mall Gazette*.' She was enchanted with the idea. 'Oh! how pleased,' she cried, 'papa will be!' Thackeray had been dead for two years, but his daughter cherished the idea most vividly that her father kept his interest in those he had loved, and knew everything that happened here.

"Annie Thackeray's delight decided the name of the new journal in my judgment. A day or two afterwards, when in conversation with Mr. —, one of our intended contributors, I referred to the coming journal as the *Pall Mall Gazette*. 'What!' he said, 'it is *not* a joke then? You really *do* mean to have that name?' It will be remembered that in 'Pendennis,' the quite imaginary *Pall Mall Gazette* was described in the prospectus, supposed to be written for it by Captain Shandon, as 'a journal written by gentlemen for gentlemen.' Now we had not only borrowed the name of this journal, but it was quite true that, to a very unusual extent, our contributors were not professional writers in the ordinary sense, and were in a higher social class than most newspaper men. So the phrase 'a journal written by gentlemen for gentlemen'—though not part of our

prospectus—was frequently quoted against us in friendly—or unfriendly—chaff.

“I did not rush into this enterprise,” continues George Smith. “Between Mr. Greenwood’s proposal and the date on which the first number of the *Pall Mall Gazette* appeared, was an interval of more than two years. During the whole of that time we were more or less occupied in considering the proposed newspaper, and shaping plans for its appearance. I was then in partnership with Mr. King and, under our partnership agreement, could not enter upon such an enterprise myself without his consent. Mr. King, after some consideration, accepted my proposal that the newspaper should be published on account of the firm; that I should have the entire control and management of the paper; and that he should have the power, at any moment he pleased, to require me to discontinue the paper, or to purchase his interest in it at a valuation. I was to be at liberty to establish other newspapers, giving him the option of being interested in them on the same terms.”

A business office was taken in Salisbury Street, with printing offices close by; as a dress rehearsal for publication of the first number, which was to appear on February 7, 1865, a sample number was set up under working conditions and a few copies struck off. Mr. King, who was a stout Conservative, found it too Liberal for his politics and exercised his option of withdrawal. Thus the *Pall Mall* became the venture of George Smith, not of Smith, Elder. Its early struggles, its subsequent success, its often amusing and nearly always triumphant defence in libel actions,* lie outside a history of the firm, save for two points. George Smith’s enormous exertions during the first years of the arduous struggle, when he often worked for twenty hours out of the twenty-four, doubtless contributed towards his serious breakdown in the late ’sixties. The other relation between the journal and the firm, and that a negative relation, was that George

* See Chap. XIII, p. 115.

Smith would not use his newspaper interest to push his publishing interest. He would not allow any of the books published by his firm to be reviewed in the *Pall Mall*. The one exception to this rule of honour was when, as a matter of loyalty, Sir Theodore Martin's "Life of the Prince Consort" was noticed in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, and Sir Theodore himself was not at all pleased by the independence of the review.

CHAPTER XI

THE PLAN OF THE "CORNHILL MAGAZINE"

THE plan of launching a new magazine by the help primarily of a popular serial " flashed upon me suddenly," writes George Smith, " as did most of the ideas which have led to successful operations in my life." It was, in effect, a new development of an old idea. As early as 1836, " Pickwick," designed as an illustrated series of humorous sketches to repeat on a larger scale the recent success of Seymour's pictures in " The Squib Annual," had achieved an unparalleled success. Our grandparents used to recall the hot impatience with which the monthly parts were awaited, the rush to meet the coach with its precious burden, the instant tearing open of the package to devour the next instalment without waiting to reach home. Most of Dickens' novels similarly appeared first in parts independently of any magazine ; but Bentley, launching his *Miscellany* at the New Year of 1837, with Dickens himself as editor for a time, secured " Oliver Twist " as a serial. Many years later " Hard Times " was serialised in *Household Words* (1854), " The Tale of Two Cities " and " Great Expectations " in *All the Year Round* (1859 and 1860), both which magazines were successively edited by Dickens.

Thus as regards the first publication of novels in serial parts, independently or in miscellaneous magazines, George Smith had sound precedent before him, and the name of Thackeray was one to conjure with. The novelty of his scheme lay in uniting the popular lure of the serial with the literary work of the more serious reviews, and this at the ordinary price of the serial part alone or of the cheapest of the magazines alone. They

would get for one shilling what had previously cost them two and six. His own idea of a cheap magazine had a counterpart in other minds, and the first number of *Macmillan's Magazine*, also at a shilling, saw the light two months before the *Cornhill* was actually launched, although it then made no great speciality of fiction. Nevertheless, although the public were in the enjoyment of several popular magazines with a supply of good fiction, and though a Christmas story by Dickens would run up his circulation to 300,000, there was undoubtedly room for the literary magazine as George Smith conceived it.

It is hard to measure the popularity of the serial two or three generations ago by present standards. The taste for serials is not what it was in the early and mid-Victorian days when Dickens flourished and the *primum mobile* of the *Cornhill* was a serial by Thackeray. The public is divided, apparently, into those who still love the monthly serial's linked attraction long drawn out, and who are still found occasionally to beg for two serials at once ; those who enjoy the rapid succession of dashing chapters in a daily feuilleton—just to see how it goes on—and those, a large class, who frankly cannot bear a story in scattered fragments, but prefer to wait till it comes out as a whole. Indeed, the serial nowadays tends to be swamped by the mass of novels, complete at one stroke, which give the reader his full satisfaction from beginning to end before the serial takes the next step in its stately progress. In the vacant "interlunar cave" between one instalment and the next the novel reader has choice of full five score new stories fresh from the press, their interest a thread unbroken, a run without a check, all brought easily to the very door by the smooth-running organisation of the circulating library. Readers are accused of impatience to-day ; it may be shrewdly suspected that readers of old were patient less of choice than of necessity, seeing that they had not such a rich abundance of literary alternatives.

As to the value of serialisation to author and publisher, it may

help as a good advertisement, as leading to the best advertisement of all, the book being talked about; those who do not read it serially tend to read it afterwards, if it is their "kind," and those who have, often like to read it again as a whole, to revive and gather up their former scattered impressions. On the other hand, serialisation was sometimes regarded as detracting from the book sales in the time of the old three-volume novel at 31s. 6d. Thus in 1867 Mudie's thought they had but little chance of a wide circulation of "The Village on the Cliff" in this format. All the world, they said, reads the *Cornhill*, and the number of their subscribers who care to have the story apart from the magazine is comparatively few and would be nearly as well pleased if Mudie's gave them the bound volumes of the *Cornhill*. It might, they suggested, answer the purpose of the firm if they printed at once a cheaper edition at 12s. or 13s., in which case Mudie's would take 500 copies. Smith & Elder adopted the plan with good results.

In like manner, it seems that previous serialisation was adverse to the acceptance of James Payn's novels in the 'sixties as well as of "East Lynne."

In pursuance of George Smith's plan to give the public the best fiction by the best writers, the *Cornhill* in its earlier years, as afterwards in its latest years under Reginald Smith, generally arranged to have two serials running at the same time. One at least was a long serial; sometimes this was overlapped by another long story; shorter stories, told in three to six parts, would occasionally be fitted in beside it according to convenience. Thus it might even happen that with the beginning of one of these and the end of another, instalments of three stories would appear in the same number.

The tap-root, so to say, of the *Cornhill* was a story by Thackeray, "Lovel the Widower." For the other serial another novelist of the first rank was approached, and "Framley Parsonage" was written. It is told in the next chapter how

Anthony Trollope came to receive the place of honour, while Thackeray reserved the last pages of the number for his own work.

While "Framley Parsonage" ran for sixteen numbers, "Lovel," in six parts, was succeeded by "The Four Georges," and that again, in Nos. 13 to 22, by "The Adventures of Philip," with the "Roundabout Papers" at intervals, so that as long as Thackeray lived, his connection with the *Cornhill* was unbroken. "Denis Duval," left unfinished at his death, appeared from March 1864 onwards.

In succession to "Framley Parsonage," and parallel with the long line of Thackeray's stories, came "Agnes of Sorrento," by Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe. After this was finished, and overlapping the last two numbers of "Philip," came George Eliot's "Romola," to be joined, as soon as "Philip" was done, by "The Small House at Allington," one of Trollope's best, and Miss Anne Thackeray's six-number tale, "The Story of Elizabeth." Six months later, and Mrs. Gaskell appears with "Cousin Phyllis," and her last story, "Wives and Daughters."

In December 1864, overlapping "Denis Duval," "Armada" began, a story in twenty numbers from the pen of Wilkie Collins, which in critical estimation upheld the reputation of a skilful weaver of plots which he had won with "The Woman in White" and "The Moonstone." Anthony Trollope appears once more in 1866 with "The Claverings." Between Miss Thackeray's "The Village on the Cliff," July 1866, and her "Old Kensington," April 1872, the list catches the eye with such names as Charles Lever, with "The Bramleighs of Bishop's Folly," "That Boy of Norcott's," the short series "Shamrockiana," and "Lord Kilgobbin"; Charles Reade, with "Put Yourself in his Place," and George Meredith, with "Harry Richmond," "Stonedge" and "Lettice Lisle" by Lady Verney, and "Against Time" by A. I. Shand, besides a translation of Erckmann-Chatrian's "Story of the Plebiscite," the latter,

however, like Adelaide Sartoris' "A Week in a French Country House," only occupying three numbers.

The fourth year of Leslie Stephen's regime (1874) introduced two new writers of fiction whose brilliance was to link the older with the middle period: Thomas Hardy with "Far from the Madding Crowd" and "The Hand of Ethelberta," and Mrs. Oliphant with "A Rose in June," "Carita," and "Within the Precincts."

Grouped with these come William Black with "Three Feathers" and "White Wings"; R. D. Blackmore with "Erema"; Henry James with "Daisy Miller" and "Washington Square"; James Payn himself with "A Grape from a Thorn," "The Burnt Million," and "The Disappearance of George Driffell"; Julian Hawthorne with "Pauline"; W. E. Norris with "Mademoiselle de Mersac," "No New Thing," "The Countess Radna," "Mathew Austin," and "Clarissa Furiosa"; Margaret Veley with "For Percival" and "Damocles"; "Love the Debt" by Richard Ashe King; "By the Gate of the Sea" and "Rainbow Gold" by D. Christie Murray; and, in two parts only, "The Merry Men," by R. L. Stevenson.

After this excursus on serials in general and the place of the serial in the genesis of the *Cornhill*, George Smith's own account of the founding of the magazine shall be quoted.

CHAPTER XII

THE "CORNHILL MAGAZINE"—THACKERAY AND GEORGE ELIOT

"I HAD, at first, no idea," George Smith records, "of securing Thackeray as editor. In spite of all his literary gifts I did not attribute to him the business qualities which go to make a good editor. But a novel by Thackeray was essential to my scheme. I drafted on a slip of paper the terms I was prepared to offer for his co-operation, and went to him with it. I said I wanted him to read a little memorandum and added: 'I wonder whether you will consider it, or will at once consign it to your waste-paper basket?' Here are the *ipsissima verba* of my proposal:—

"Smith, Elder & Co. have it in contemplation to commence the publication of a Monthly Magazine on January 1, 1860. They are desirous of inducing Mr. Thackeray to contribute to their periodical, and they make the following proposal to Mr. Thackeray:—

"1. That he shall write either one or two novels of the ordinary size for publication in the Magazine—one-twelfth portion of each novel (estimated to be about equal to one number of a serial) to appear in each number of the Magazine.

"2. That Mr. Thackeray shall assign to Smith, Elder & Co. the right to publish the novels in their Magazine and in a separate form afterwards, and to all sums to be received for the work from American and Continental publishers.

"3. That Smith, Elder & Co. shall pay Mr. Thackeray £350 each month.

"4. That the profits of all editions of the novels published at a lower price than the first edition shall be equally divided between Mr. Thackeray and Smith, Elder & Co.

"65, CORNHILL,

"February 19, 1859.

"Thackeray read the slip very carefully, and, with characteristic

absence of guile, allowed me to see that he regarded the terms as phenomenal. When he finished reading the paper he said with a droll smile : ' I am not going to put such a document as *this* into my waste-paper basket.'

"We had a little talk of an explanatory kind, and he agreed to consider the whole matter. Thackeray subsequently accepted my proposals and the success of this part of my plans was assured.

"My next step was to secure an editor. I applied in the first instance to Mr. Tom Hughes, but he could not say 'Yes.' He had thrown in his lot, he explained, with Macmillan's, and did not feel free to take other literary work. Several other names were considered by me, but none seemed to be exactly what I wanted, and I was at my wits' end. All my plans, indeed, were 'hung up' pending the engagement of a suitable editor. We were then living at Wimbledon, and I used to ride on the Common before breakfast. One morning, just as I had pulled up my horse after a smart gallop, that good genius which has so often helped me whispered into my ear, 'Why should not Mr. Thackeray himself edit the magazine, and you yourself do what is necessary to supplement any want of business qualifications on his part? You know that he has a fine literary judgment, a great reputation with men of letters as well as with the public, and any writer would be proud to contribute to a periodical under his editorship.'

"After breakfast I drove straight to Thackeray's house in Onslow Square, talked to him of my difficulty, and induced him to accept the editorship, for which I was to pay him a salary of £1,000 a year. His very name as editor gave the new magazine distinction.

"Then I set to work with the utmost energy to make the undertaking a success. We secured the most brilliant contributors in every quarter. Our terms were lavish almost to the point of recklessness. No pains and no cost were spared to make the new magazine the best periodical yet known to English literature."

The name of the *Cornhill Magazine* was suggested by Thackeray, who wrote an excellent advertisement for the new magazine in the form of a letter to G. H. Lewes. "It has a sound of jollity and abundance about it." "Our Store-house being in Cornhill, we date and name our Magazine from its place of

publication." But, at the time, it was much ridiculed. The world was familiar with magazines named after their publishers ; there was *Blackwood's*, the original *Maga* ; there were *Colburn's Miscellany* and *Chambers' Journal* and *Fraser's*. The names of cities lent dignity to the *Edinburgh* and the *Westminster Review*. But this was a street name.

"Sarcastic journalists asked whether it suited the 'dignity' of literature to label a magazine with the name of a street? Should we not have next such periodicals as *The Smithfield Market Review* or *The Leadenhall Market Magazine*, etc.? But the name *Cornhill Magazine* really set the example of a quite new class of titles for periodicals ; titles that linked the magazine that bore it to some historic locality in London, where, perhaps, it was published, ranging from *Temple Bar* and *Belgravia* to *St. Paul's Magazine* and *The Strand*.

"The cover of the new magazine, designed at Sir Henry Cole's suggestion by Mr. Godfrey Sykes, a young student at the South Kensington Schools of Art, had the good fortune to strike the popular taste, and I still think it most effective. When I showed the sketch of the cover to Thackeray he said characteristically, 'What a lovely design. I hope you have given the man a good cheque!' The only complaint that has ever been made against the design is that the sower shown in it is sowing with his left hand. But a sower uses both hands alternately. He goes down the row scattering with his right hand, and, as he comes back, he scatters with his left. I was in the country just after this criticism on the design appeared in the papers, and actually saw a man sowing with his left hand ; and, naturally, I made the most of the circumstance."

The original design is now in the Department of Engraving at the Victoria and Albert Museum. The salient feature of it is the four medallions, boldly printed in black on the familiar orange ground, round about the central oblong panel. Assuredly there is a fine breadth, simplicity, and vigour in the small figures of the ploughman, the sower, the reaper, and the thresher representing the seasons of the year. To modern eyes, however,

the subsidiary decorations which fill the space round medallions and central panel, though admirably balanced, are over-elaborate in detail, and by their elaboration fail to show up forcibly enough the smaller panels which bear the date of the issue and the name of the magazine itself, matters certainly of much practical importance. As a work of art it won universal admiration in 1860, and we are still conscious of the beauty of its chief features as well as its traditional charm, even if critical of its subsidiary parts and its adaptation to its proper purpose.

Anthony Trollope, already successful as a writer of clerical novels, was not personally known to either Thackeray or George Smith, though in October 1859 he had offered his services to the projected *Cornhill* as a writer of short stories. The invitation to write an additional serial for the first number was the beginning of a cordial friendship and a long business alliance with George Smith, who relates how, when the invitation was sent :—

"Trollope came to see me and naturally asked what was my scale of payment. I replied that we had no fixed scale for such works as his ; would he mind telling me what was the largest sum he had ever received for a novel ? When he mentioned £500, I offered him double the amount if he would write one of his clerical novels for the *Cornhill*. He at first proposed to give me an Irish novel which he had on the stocks, but to this I demurred ; an Irish novel would not suit my public. His genius shone in delineating clerical life and character, and I wanted a clerical novel. The result was 'Framley Parsonage,' which proved an attraction in the *Cornhill* and had a large sale afterwards.

"In his 'Autobiography' Trollope describes his astonishment at finding the *Cornhill Magazine*, after its advent had been announced so long, still unsupplied with a serial, and he quotes this as a proof of Thackeray's incorrigible habit of loitering. 'Framley Parsonage,' he says, had to take the foremost place in the new magazine in default of a novel which Thackeray *ought* to have written, but did not.

"But there was no default on Thackeray's part. It was an

example of his quaint and chivalrous courtesy in literary matters. His 'Lovel the Widower' duly appeared in the first number of the *Cornhill*, but at the end; 'Framley Parsonage' was given the place of honour on grounds of pure courtesy, as from host to guest.

"It occurred to me that if I could secure Tennyson as a regular contributor to the new magazine it would prove a great attraction. His 'Idylls of the King' had not long appeared, and I conceived the idea of asking him to write for us another set of 'Idylls.' Tennyson was then staying with Mrs. Cameron on Putney Heath, and I wrote to ask if I might call upon him on a matter of business. He made an appointment with me, and, during our interview, I proposed that I should pay him five thousand guineas for as many lines as were contained in the 'Idylls of the King' on condition that the poems should be printed in the *Cornhill Magazine*, and that I should publish them for three years afterwards.

"That offer was really a 'record' as far as the market rate of poetry in English literature, up to that time, was concerned. As compared with anything Tennyson had yet received for his poems it might fairly be described as extravagant. Tennyson listened to my proposal with entire coolness. He asked me to smoke with him and chatted pleasantly, but gave me no idea as to whether my proposal was acceptable. Mrs. Tennyson just then came into the room, and Tennyson, addressing her, said, 'My dear! We are much richer than we thought we were. Mr. Smith has just offered me five thousand guineas for a book the size of the "Idylls." And,' he continued, 'if Mr. Smith offers five thousand, of course the book is worth ten!' A remark at which we all laughed. Nothing came of my proposal, which I had no temptation to renew after the rapid success achieved by the magazine. But it will be remembered that Tennyson contributed his fine poem 'Tithonus' to an early number.

"We had secured a quite remarkable body of contributors; public attention was keenly fixed on the new venture, and when the first number appeared in January 1860, the sale was astounding. It was the literary event of the year. Along Cornhill itself nothing was to be seen but people carrying bundles of the orange-coloured magazine. Of the first number no less than 120,000 copies were sold."

The exhilarating effect of the *Cornhill's* success on its editor is amusingly told by Mr. James T. Fields in his "Yesterdays with Authors."

"The enormous circulation achieved by the *Cornhill Magazine*, when it was first started with Thackeray for its editor in chief, is a matter of literary history. The announcement by his publishers that a sale of a hundred and ten thousand of the first number had been reached made the editor half delirious with joy, and he ran away to Paris to be rid of the excitement for a few days. I met him by appointment at his hotel in the Rue de la Paix, and found him wild with exultation and full of enthusiasm for excellent George Smith, his publisher. 'London,' he exclaimed, 'is not big enough to contain me now, and I am obliged to add Paris to my residence. Great heavens,' said he, throwing up his long arms, 'where will this tremendous circulation stop! Who knows but that I shall have to add Vienna and Rome to my whereabouts? If the worst comes to the worst, New York, also, may fall into my clutches, and only the Rocky Mountains may be able to stop my progress!' Those days in Paris with him were simply tremendous. We dined at all possible and impossible places together. We walked round and round the glittering court of the Palais Royal, gazing in at the windows of the jewellers' shops, and all my efforts were necessary to restrain him from rushing in and ordering a pocketful of diamonds and 'other trifles,' as he called them; 'for,' said he, 'how can I spend the princely income which Smith allows me for editing the *Cornhill*, unless I begin instantly somewhere?' If he saw a group of three or four persons talking together in an excited way, after the manner of the then *riant* Parisian people, he would whisper to me with immense gesticulation: 'There, there, you see the news has reached Paris, and perhaps the number has gone up since my last accounts from London.' His spirits during those few days were colossal, and he told me that he found it impossible to sleep, 'for counting up his subscribers.'"

It has already been told how the proprietor shared his unexpected measure of success with the editor, by doubling his salary.

No doubt the success was deserved. There was a remarkable

body of contributors, and they gave of their best. No other group of writers equally brilliant had ever before been brought together within the covers of one magazine. During the first year Fiction was represented by Thackeray and Anthony Trollope, Mrs. Gaskell and Charles Lever, Mrs. Archer Clive, authoress of "Paul Ferroll"; Poetry by Tennyson and Hood, Father Prout (Mahony), Monckton Milnes and Owen Meredith (Lord Lytton), Mrs. Browning and Adelaide Procter, Frederick Locker, Washington Irving. Sir John Burgoyne wrote of military matters and Allen Young of the Arctic; on Science and kindred subjects G. H. Lewes and James Hinton and Sir Henry Thompson; on Art and the Drama Ruskin, Sala, John Hollingshead. Literary criticism, essays and general articles came from Matthew Arnold, Laurence Oliphant, Frederick Greenwood, Fitzjames Stephen, J. W. Kaye, Herman Merivale, Albert Smith, M. J. Higgins (Jacob Omnium), E. S. Dallas, S. R. Hole, Henry Cole, and, a name now half forgotten, the journalist, Edward Townsend.

George Smith continues:—

"I have said that our payments to contributors were lavish. As figures are generally interesting, I may mention that the largest amount expended on the literature of a single number was £1,183 3s. 8d. (August 1862), and the total expenditure under that head for the first four years was £32,280 11s. 0d., the illustrations costing in addition £4,376 11s. 0d. In the years between 1860 and 1879, the sum of £84,675 was paid for purely literary work in connexion with the magazine. Expenditure on this scale for literary work alone was, up to this time, unprecedented in magazine literature. (On preliminary advertisement £5,000 was spent.)

"The largest payment made for a novel was £7,000 to George Eliot for 'Romola.' The largest payment made for short articles was £12 12s. a page to Mr. Thackeray, for his 'Roundabout Papers.'

"In regard to the payment to George Eliot, an incident seems to deserve honourable record as a signal proof of the author's artistic sensibility.

"It was always my policy to secure for the *Cornhill Magazine*

the best literary work available, and I naturally wished for a novel from George Eliot.* G. H. Lewes one day mentioned to me that George Eliot had in hand an Italian novel, and said that if I would come to their house early one evening she would read me what she had written of it. I always appreciated George Eliot's voice; a voice clear and sweet and soft, I have always held with Shakespeare to be 'an excellent thing in woman.' But till I heard George Eliot read the first chapters of '*Romola*' I had not known how deeply a woman's voice can charm. She had one of the softest and most agreeable voices I have ever known; and those who have ever heard her will understand how the opening sentences of '*Romola*' charmed me as they fell from their author's lips.

"The next day I wrote to Lewes offering £10,000—a sum without precedent at that time—for the book for the *Cornhill*, with certain limited rights of publication afterwards, with a stipulation that the book should be of a certain length and extend through sixteen numbers of the magazine.

"When the work was almost completed and its publication about to begin, George Eliot said to me: 'I find I cannot properly divide the book into sixteen parts. It doesn't lend itself to this division. It must be published in twelve parts.' This somewhat disturbed me, and I argued against her decision. But George Eliot was firm. She would not inflict what she thought would be an artistic injury upon her book by breaking it up into sixteen parts.

"I said at last, 'I dare say this has not occurred to you, that this change would make a serious difference to me. For one thing, under the division into twelve parts each part will occupy more pages in the *Cornhill* than we should care to give to one novel. This, perhaps, is not an insuperable difficulty; but there remains a consideration of another kind. I have to consider what the *Cornhill* can afford to pay for its contributions. If I divide £10,000 by sixteen I get one amount; but you will see that if I have to divide £10,000 by twelve I get a much larger sum, and the cost falls much more heavily on each number of the magazine. Under the original arrangement, dividing the

* George Smith, who had long ago known G. H. Lewes, made the acquaintance of George Eliot in 1859, and after the Leweses set up house in St. John's Wood, was a constant visitor at their Sunday At Homes.

novel by sixteen, I should pay £625 for each instalment; but dividing it by twelve the cost to me for each is a little over £833.' 'Yes,' George Eliot replied, 'that *has* occurred to me; but I thought it would be a simple calculation to see how much less I should receive for the book if published in twelve parts instead of sixteen.' 'The calculation,' I said, 'is simple enough, but it means a substantial reduction in the amount you would receive. You will get £7,500 instead of £10,000'; and I begged her to reconsider the question. I reminded her that the magazine form of the story was temporary; the book would afterwards appear in a complete form, and any artistic injury the work might be supposed to suffer owing to its being broken up into sixteen parts would be temporary.

"But George Eliot was firm. She was cheerfully content to accept the smaller sum for the sake of an artistic division of her novel. Lewes himself by no means shared George Eliot's artistic scruples. He seconded me heart and soul; for he was not so indifferent to money considerations as the woman of genius. But George Eliot was immovable; and, much to Lewes's disgust, instead of paying £10,000 for 'Romola,' I paid her £7,500 (perhaps the highest sum given for a novel up to that date). Its author threw away £2,500 on what many people would think a literary caprice, but what she regarded as an act of loyalty to her canons of art.*

"In one respect 'Romola' has always seemed to me to be a veritable *tour de force*. Before she wrote it George Eliot had been in Florence only once, and that for a few days. Certainly not for a week, yet all the local descriptions are as accurate, and the 'atmosphere' of the book is as characteristically Florentine as if it had been written by a native! I took a copy of 'Romola' with me when, in company with my wife, I first visited Florence; and one of us—I need not particularise which—appropriated the book so that I had to buy a second copy. 'Romola' served us as a guide-book. We stood on San Miniato, looked down upon Florence, walked about the bridges and the streets, found the house of De' Bardi; and the local colouring is as accurate as could be. T. Adolphus Trollope always claimed that this was

* After all George Eliot miscalculated the length of "Romola," and it appeared in 14 parts, for which the sum of £7,000 was eventually paid.

his doing. He acted as a sort of guide to George Eliot when she visited Florence, and he used to say the way she 'absorbed' it was amazing. He was simply astonished at her power of grasping locality.

" 'Romola' did not increase the sale of the magazine; it is difficult to say what, if any, effect it had in sustaining the sale.* As a separate publication it had not, I think, the success it deserved.

" George Eliot offered me her next book, 'Felix Holt,' and Lewes gave me to understand she expected £5,000 for it. I read the MS. to my wife, and we came to the conclusion it would not be a profitable venture and I declined it."

* Realizing this, George Eliot sent Mr. Smith the story "Brother Jacob" as a free gift to the *Cornhill*.

CHAPTER XIII

THE "CORNHILL" CONTINUED—THACKERAY'S EDITORSHIP—CORNHILL DINNERS—THORNS IN THE CUSHION, HIS OWN AND HIS SUCCESSORS'—ANONYMITY

To quote again from George Smith's *Reminiscences* :—

"We lightened our labours in the service of the *Cornhill* by monthly dinners. The principal contributors used to assemble at my table in Gloucester Square every month while we were in London ; and these 'Cornhill dinners' were very delightful and interesting. Thackeray always attended, though he was often in an indifferent state of health. At one of these dinners Trollope was to meet Thackeray for the first time and was equally looking forward to an introduction to him. Just before dinner I took him up to Thackeray and introduced him with all the suitable empressement. Thackeray curtly said, 'How do ?' and, to my wonder and Trollope's anger, turned on his heel ! He was suffering at the time from a malady which at that particular moment caused him a sudden spasm of pain ; though we, of course, could not know this. I well remember the expression on Trollope's face at that moment, and no one who knew Trollope will doubt that he *could* look furious on an adequate—and sometimes on an inadequate—occasion ! He came to me the next morning in a very wrathful mood, and said that had it not been that he was in my house for the first time, he would have walked out of it. He vowed he would never speak to Thackeray again, etc., etc. I did my best to soothe him ; and, though rather violent and irritable, he had a fine nature with a substratum of great kindliness, and I believe he left my room in a happier frame of mind than when he entered it. He and Thackeray became afterwards close friends.

"These Cornhill dinners gave rise to another incident which at this distance of time seems trivial enough, but which, at the moment, woke some indignation in my own immediate circle.

Mr. Edmund Yates, who had a dispute with Thackeray which ended in Mr. Yates's compulsory withdrawal from the Garrick Club, did me the honour of writing an article for a New York paper disparaging the *Cornhill Magazine*, making a false statement as to its falling circulation, and describing one of these dinners—at none of which he was present. Yates represented me as a good man of business but an entirely unread person; and, by way of throwing ridicule on the Cornhill functions, told—or rather mistold—the story of what had been said at one of the dinners. According to Yates, Thackeray said—in reference to a well-known incident in Dr. Johnson's life told by Boswell—'This reminds me of Mr. Tonson's dinners. I suppose, my dear Smith, you have not got Dr. Johnson behind the screen?' to which Yates described me as answering, 'God bless my soul, Mr. Thackeray, there is no one of the name of Johnson here.'

Yates's account was obviously at second-hand, and was blunderingly inaccurate. The fact was that Thackeray, confusing one name with another, as he was apt to do, said, 'This reminds me of one of Mr. Curle's dinners'; and then went on to ask if Dr. Johnson was behind the screen. In Boswell's version, the dinner took place at Tonson's—a man of honour and standing; Curle, as every one knows, was an infamous bookseller of the Dr. Johnson period, notorious for every sort of villainy. Thackeray's blunder in substituting Curle's name for Tonson's aroused a laugh, partly at his expense and partly at mine; and I answered rather sharply, perhaps, 'There is no Dr. Johnson here.'

"The story in the New York paper was made the subject of an article, of the sneering type, in the *Saturday Review*. The *Saturday Review* article left me quite undisturbed, but my wife, who was ill at the time, was much annoyed, and Thackeray with generous sympathy rebuked the *Saturday* in a brilliant 'Roundabout Paper' entitled 'On Screens in Dining-Rooms.' 'That a publisher should be criticised for his dinners, and for the conversations that did *not* take place there, is this,' asked Thackeray, 'tolerable press practice, legitimate joking, or honourable warfare?' Shortly after the *Saturday Review* article appeared Trollope walked into my room and said he had come to confess that *he* had given Yates the information on which his article was founded. He expressed the deepest regret, but said, 'I told the story not against you, but against Thackeray, and his blunder in

Ans
176

seeming to compare you with that rascal Curle.' I am afraid I answered him rather angrily. Trollope, however, took it very meekly, and said : ' I know I have done wrong, and you may say anything you like to me.'

"The monthly dinners were not our only alleviations of the regular routine of business. Whenever any new literary arrangement with Mr. Thackeray was pending, he would playfully suggest that he always found his mind clearer for business at Greenwich than elsewhere, especially if his digestion were assisted by a certain brown hock at 15s. a bottle, which Mr. Hart, the landlord, used to produce. On these occasions Sir Charles Taylor, a very agreeable and prominent member of the Garrick Club, a friend of Thackeray and an acquaintance of mine, was always present. Beyond an occasional witticism, Sir Charles Taylor did not take part in our negotiations (and, indeed, there was no negotiation, for I cannot remember a single instance in which Mr. Thackeray demurred to any proposal that I made to him), but his social gifts made our little dinners very pleasant."

In the later years of the firm's history, Reginald Smith used from time to time to give Cornhill dinners at which contributors eagerly seized the opportunity of making or renewing acquaintance with their editor and their fellow-contributors.

To the first of these meetings came such veterans as Leslie Stephen, George Smith, Sir Charles Elton, and Colonel Vibart of Mutiny fame ; to the last Sir Algernon West, long secretary to Mr. Gladstone, and the Bishop of Bristol (G. F. Browne), who had written for the *Cornhill* as an Alpine pioneer in the early 'sixties. For the rest, there were representatives of every department of literature and science, from Thomas Hardy, grown old in achievement, to George Calderon, cut off in his ripening promise ; from the physician turned novelist to the judge turned poet. The scholar from the British Museum, the lawyer from the Courts, found the soldier and the sailor as their fellow-writers. The literary Canon, and the educationist Member of Parliament, the administrator of some great tropical dependency

or the observer of men and manners at home, shared their *Cornhill* countersign with the roving naturalist or sportsman.

These symposia, so admirably presided over by the host, so eagerly looked forward to by the guests until cut short by the Great War, were eight in number—two in 1899, one each in 1904, 1905, 1907, 1910, 1911, and 1913. They were attended by eighty-four contributors old and new, of whom thirteen were guests on more than one occasion.

The dinner on June 30, 1910, celebrated the Jubilee of the *Cornhill*; later in the evening other friends came in to enjoy a little play which Mrs. de la Pasture had written for the occasion, as is described in a later chapter (XIV).

Appropriate touches of detail were not forgotten, down to the menu cards which recalled the outward semblance of the magazine. As one of the guests wrote in 1899: "The decoration of the table, carried out I noticed by the colour of the bonbons even, in the orange livery of the magazine, was a very pretty idea." Another of the guests, gifted with a journalistic flair, would fain have sent a paragraph to the press *à propos* of a rising young man of letters having been "present at an ambrosian or ambrosial night of the *Cornhill Magazine*," saying something discreet that would fill the unprivileged world with envy and admiration, for "after all, your dinner was a literary event as well as a very delightful private entertainment." Needless to say his suggestion was disallowed.

To continue the Reminiscences :—

"One little anecdote may illustrate the somewhat unconventional manner in which the business of the *Cornhill Magazine* was occasionally treated. Trollope came to me in Pall Mall, where we had now a branch office, to arrange for a new serial. I told him my terms, but he demurred to my offer of £2,000 and said that he had hoped for £3,000. I shook my head. 'Well,' he replied, 'let us toss for that other £1,000.' I asked him if he wished to ruin me, and said that if my banker heard of my tossing authors for their copyrights he would certainly close my account ;

and what about my clerks? How I should demoralise them if they suspected me of tossing with an author for his manuscript! We ultimately came to an agreement on my terms, which were sufficiently liberal. But I felt uncomfortable—I felt mean—I had refused a challenge. To relieve my mind I said, ‘Now that is settled, if you will come over the way to my club, where we can have a little room to ourselves for five minutes, I will toss you for £1,000 with pleasure.’ Mr. Trollope did not accept the offer.

“The large number of copies printed obliged us to go to press earlier in the month than most of the magazines, and we found some difficulty in getting articles up to time. There was an article by Mr. George Augustus Sala which was very much behind time, and the printer came to me with a long face. I said that I would call on Mr. Sala on my way to the City and try to get the article. I did call, and I knocked at the door of his chambers, first with my knuckles and then with the knob of my stick, but without effect, and after delivering a wrathful kick or two upon it I turned away in disgust. As I was going downstairs I met a friend of Sala whom I knew. ‘If you are going to see Sala,’ I said, ‘you need not go upstairs; he’s not there.’ ‘Do *you* want to see him?’ he asked. ‘Indeed I do,’ said I. ‘Then come up with me.’ There was no knocking at the door this time; my friend took a penny out of his pocket and dropped it mysteriously into the slot which had been made for a letter-box. It had hardly ceased rolling on the floor before Sala appeared. He had only a page or two of his article to write, and I waited for it and carried it off.

“He had reason to expect visitors of an unwelcome sort, and so kept his door sternly shut against all knocks. Only to a few intimate friends who were not in league with his creditors, was known the mystic signal of the penny at which the door was opened. I took away a new sense of the humours—and the tragedies—of a literary life.

“The *Cornhill* was edited by Thackeray from 1860 to May 1862. I cannot truly say that he was, in a business sense, a good editor, and I had to do some part of the work myself. This was a pleasure to me, for I had the greatest possible admiration and affection for him. I had taken the precaution to arrange that I should have a veto on contributions; for I had a sufficient knowledge of Thackeray’s wayward and erratic judgment, which

made him liable as Editor to be influenced by totally irrelevant circumstances, to know that this was absolutely necessary. Such a relation between editor and publisher would have worked ill in the case of some men ; but Thackeray's nature was so generous, and my regard for him was so sincere, that no misunderstanding between us ever occurred.

"I used to drive round to his house in Onslow Square nearly every morning, and we discussed manuscripts and subjects together. He handed me one morning a MS. and said, 'I hope, Smith, you won't exercise your veto upon that.' I asked, 'Why? Is it in your opinion so very good?' 'No,' he answered, 'I can't say it is really good; but it is written by such a pretty woman! She has such lovely eyes and such a sweet voice.' To my more prosaic nature these did not seem to be quite adequate reasons for accepting an article for the *Cornhill*. I read the MS. and, not being under the glamour of the writer's beauty, I said to Thackeray the next morning, 'This will never do for us.' 'Very well,' said Thackeray, with a sigh, 'I am very sorry.' Before I left—and, as I supposed, to show he was not offended with my obstinacy—he asked me to dine with him on a given day. When the dinner came off he sent me down with the writer of the article in question, and a most agreeable evening I passed. 'What do you say *now* about that article, my young friend?' he asked in a tone of triumph the next time we met. I replied I preferred the writer to the article. If it was a question of putting the *writer*, instead of the article, into the *Cornhill*, I might yield. As this was not possible the article was sent back.

"Thackeray was far too tender-hearted to be happy as editor. He could not say 'No' without himself suffering a pang as keen as was inflicted by that 'No' on the rejected contributor himself. He would take pains—such as I believe few editors have ever taken—to soften his refusal, one of the most noteworthy examples being the letter to Mrs. Browning, declining 'Lord Walter's Wife,' which is printed in Lady Ritchie's article (*Cornhill*, January 1901).

"Thackeray poured out his own sorrows as an editor in one of his 'Roundabout Papers.' It is entitled 'Thorns in the Cushion,' and is a good example of Thackeray's humour and an illustration of the effect upon him of editorial duties. No one can read the article without realising as I did that Mr. Thackeray came to a wise decision when he resigned the editorship of the

magazine, and thus consulted his own comfort and peace of mind.

"I like to think that the tender heart of this noble man of genius was not troubled by editorial thorns during the remainder of his life. But in looking back it sometimes comes to me with a feeling akin to remorse that I was the instrument of imposing on him an uncongenial task, and that I might have done more than I did to relieve him of its burden."

✓ Thackeray, who continued to contribute to the *Cornhill* after his resignation, died suddenly on Christmas Eve, 1863. Of the two memorial articles in the magazine, one was by Anthony Trollope; the other, at George Smith's invitation, by Charles Dickens, who refused to accept payment for what he considered a labour of love.

✓ In the early days of the *Cornhill*, the usual rule was for contributions to be unsigned, save in the case of eminent poets, deceased writers such as the Brontës, and as time went on, one or two novelists and writers of special authority on their subjects.

Thus in the first two volumes (1860), besides Charlotte and Emily Brontë, Tennyson, Thomas Hood, Monckton Milnes (Lord Houghton), Matthew Arnold (anonymous, however, in his next two articles), Mrs. Browning and Owen Meredith are named. Initials are accorded to Adelaide Procter and Frederick Locker. Between 1873 and 1879 the latter is given his full name thrice out of five times.

✓ Thackeray's part in the magazine was well known; was it for this reason that he signs neither "Lovel the Widower" nor the "Roundabout Papers"? He does sign "Vanitas Vanitatum," however, which was not strictly one of the Roundabout series, and, according to precedent, his posthumous work is signed. It is curious that Anthony Trollope's serial in the first volume was anonymous; his name does not appear till the last instalment of "The Small House at Allington," in 1864, though Wilkie Collins signs his first story in the next volume. The popular

Charles Lever is always anonymous. George Macdonald, anonymous in Volume I., signs from Volume IV. onwards. It is the same with the distinguished Arctic explorer, Allen Young.

Certainly the quoting of authors' names is rare. Among the twenty-two half-yearly volumes before Leslie Stephen's editorship, four give no fresh name, six only one. Looking at the list to-day, there is no hesitation about Edwin Arnold, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Mary Howitt, Francis Ann Kemble, Charles Dickens, Swinburne, G. A. Macfarren, the musician, Philip Bourke Marston, Karl Blind,* and F. T. Palgrave; scholars have not forgotten Sir John Herschel as a translator of Dante, apart from astronomical fame, nor G. A. Simcox, nor Frederick Greenwood, though he is here only named for a piece of verse, nor H. C. Merivale, son of the better known Herman Merivale, a subsequent and named contributor; but we may be puzzled to know who some of the favoured authors were; for instance, James C. Patterson, W. M. W. Call, William Smith and W. Frank Smith, E. Letherbrow, Charles Denys Conway, or Gerald Griffin. Alexander Koumanin appears as the translator of a story by Nekrasof.

Under Leslie Stephen, who did not sign his own "Hours in a Library" or other essays, signatures become rather more frequent; if the larger fame has not crowned W. T. Thornton, an educationalist, or F. Napier Broome, J. Knight, H. L. St. Barbe, Herbert A. Giles, the Rev. Harry Jones, or Theodore Tilton, there are still living names in Robert Browning, Herman Merivale, Gifford Palgrave, A. Bertram Mitford (Lord Redesdale), Julian Hawthorne,* Alfred Austin,* James Sully,* Sir Sidney Colvin, Sir Francis Doyle, Richard Burton, Vernon Lee,* A. Mary F. Robinson,* Sir W. W. Hunter, James Payn, and James Spedding,* as in those of John Addington Symonds, Austin Dobson, Henry James, Edward Dowden, Grant Allen, George Meredith, Robert Louis Stevenson, Frances Power Cobbe,

* These authors reappear anonymously on occasion.

R. A. Proctor, and Edmund Gosse, who had all contributed anonymously for some time before. To this period also belong E. M. Clerke * and T. E. Kebbel,* Mrs. Barnett, J. E. Panton,* James Thomson, A. C. Ewald,* Edmund Gurney, Mario Pratesi, as well as the two pseudonyms, Shway Yoe (Sir George Scott) and John Dangerfield (Oswald Crawford).

It was not till the third period of *Cornhill* history that signature became the rule rather than the exception, a revolutionary change which James Payn thought should not be embarked upon lightly or inadvisedly.

As regards the artists who drew for the *Cornhill*, they naturally signed their initials on their work, but throughout the first series of 47 volumes their names do not appear in the lists of illustrations. Under James Payn, however, a separate list of illustrations is not given in the six volumes which continued to be illustrated, but the artist's name is given in the general index, after the name of the book : thus " 'The Giant's Robe' " (illustrated by W. Ralston).

A few more *Cornhill* episodes may be given here. The editorial cushion, to be sure, continued to receive those thorns which were so lacerating to Thackeray's tenderness ; but other editors, other skins, and with pricks less felt, the humours of the daily budget come to the front. Thackeray himself must have been delighted with one sequel to the general rule of anonymity in the early *Cornhill*. In July 1860 Colonel Murray Prior begs to be informed whether "Framley Parsonage" is written by Anthony Trollope or by some one imitating his style, and, if so, whether by a lady or a gentleman. His excuse for troubling the editor was that a bet depended upon the answer.

"Framley Parsonage" was connected with another episode, the humour of which had a bitterer tang. A young lady in the West Country posed to her friends and relatives as the anonymous authoress ! Her positive assertion seemed very strange to one of her relations living near London, who, being aware that the

* These authors reappear anonymously on occasion.

novel was universally attributed to Trollope, wrote to inquire of the *Cornhill* editor whether one so young and inexperienced could be the author. The upshot was an interview, the most painful, George Smith declared, he ever had, when he was compelled to tell the girl's father that she had deceived him.

The special humour of occasionally receiving a round of abuse—generally on an anonymous postcard—denouncing a single article or a whole number as being in bad taste and showing such a deplorable falling-off from the good old days of the *Cornhill*, lies in the fact that this article or this number is usually singled out for particular commendation by the recognised critics, or that the "good old times" selected for the odious comparison turn out to be the least flourishing period of the magazine's existence.

One cannot pretend to guess what answer could have soothed "A Disgusted Reader," who in March 1892 loudly deplored the immoral tendency of a story by Mrs. Oliphant. A Mr. Dalyell is supposed to be drowned; his executor, a respectable lawyer, receives the large sum for which his life was insured. Two years later Mr. Dalyell turns up again and is really drowned, whether by accident or suicide. Respectable executor, widow and son agree to keep the matter secret and retain the insurance monies, thereby defrauding the Insurance Company of two years' premiums and interest. They deserve imprisonment, but receive no reprobation whatever, nor are even blackmailed by certain persons who know the secret. "I protest," exclaims Disgusted Reader, "against the immorality of the story, which stamps the *Cornhill* as a book that is unfit to be placed in the hands of the young. . . . For shame, Mrs. Oliphant, to write such rubbish, and for shame, Mr. Editor, to allow such a tale to disgrace the pages of your magazine at the risk of injuring the morals of the young."

There is joy, too, in concocting a suave reply to the peppery individual who abuses author, editor, and magazine for an

inaccurate account of an incident that happened under his very eyes, a reply gently praying that the *Cornhill* be restored to favour, inasmuch as the peccant article appeared in quite another magazine.

An amusing appreciation of the *Cornhill* and the anxiety with which its arrival was awaited comes in April 1860 from Alexander Elder, the original partner in the firm, who had retired fourteen years before and had gone to live at Lancing.

“ CORNHILL.

“ MY DEAR SIR,—

“ From the singular statements just given in the *Times*, not only of the *Espionage*, but the uniformly bad management, in every department, of the General Post Office ; I feel sure that I may now attribute the non-arrival, here, of the Month's No. of the *Cornhill Magazine* to that circumstance, and deem it right to apprise you accordingly.

“ From the regular and (to us) gratifying manner in which the former Nos. of this interesting Periodical have reached us, I cannot doubt there is some such occurrence at fault in the present instance.

“ You can have little idea how much it is missed here. A delay in the arrival of the regular and Natural *Monthly Moon* (even in this dull quarter) would be as nothing compared to the greater and now almost Unnatural delay of this *Miracle of Magazines*.

“ Will you therefore kindly find out and rectify this sad and seemingly Mysterious occurrence and thus greatly oblige,

“ Yours ever truly,

“ A. ELDER.”

Mr. Elder kept up a lively interest in the fortunes of the *Cornhill*. He writes in March 1862 that some months earlier he had found at Worthing station one of the special signboards “ handsomely framed and painted wt. the words *Cornhill Magazine* ” lying on the ground week after week. The station-master alleging that “ Mr. Smith had not sent the required fastenings for hanging it up,” Mr. Elder wiped out the indignity to his

beloved *Cornhill* and the injury to his old firm by paying for the "necessary fastenings."

Furthermore, a few days before the date of his letter he had found at Bognor station the precious board used in "the Up Train Waiting Room, or Shed" as a front support to one of the seats, which it exactly fitted and filled both in length and height. And "there sat, perched in the middle, a little Urchin, with a Lady on each side of him, whose ample *Crinoline* quite prevented the subject of your Board being usefully seen." Station-masters in those days seem to have had very primitive notions of moral as well as material responsibility. If the board was misused, Bognor wisdom replied, "It is Mr. Smith's business, and he has not been here—no—not for months past."

So much for business to which the Firm would attend; a postscript added a little jest.

"I cannot resist giving you the quaint, yet just observation made on being attracted to the Trio on the Seat by the Noise made on your Board by the Urchin's busy feet. He sat just before the *last letter* of the first word.

"There now! Look at that Mischievous little Imp—beating the Devil's *Tat-too* on the Board with his Heels! He is, literally, playing L with the subject!!"

George Smith thoroughly enjoyed defending a libel action, where indeed he did not venture into action without good cause, and was able on occasion to do good public service in unmasking impostors. These experiences are delightfully told in his chapter of reminiscence "Lawful Pleasures" (*Cornhill*, February 1901).

He fought most of these cases, and invariably with substantial success, as proprietor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*; one only arose in connection with the *Cornhill*, and that was the only one which cost him more than a farthing in damages.

It was brought in June 1869 by a gentleman calling himself "General George Henry de Strabolgie Neville Plantagenet

Harrison," who stated that he derived his title of General from one of the South American States.

To quote George Smith :—

"An article had appeared in the *Cornhill Magazine* for April 1868 under the title of Don Ricardo. It was a pleasant little gossip article, giving an account of a visit to Spain, describing a bull fight, a fight between a tiger and a bull, and between a bulldog and a donkey, with many quaint stories told to the writer by an Englishman, resident in Madrid, who was generally known as 'Don Ricardo.' One of these stories described the amusing adventures of a 'General Plantagenet Harrison' and his swindling transactions. The editor of the *Cornhill* naturally supposed that such a name, introduced into an article of this kind, was entirely fictitious, a mere humorous invention of the writer. But 'General Plantagenet Harrison' presently turned up in person, in a very angry mood, moreover, and straightway commenced an action for libel. He had been accustomed to read for literary purposes in the Public Record Office. This article had drawn attention to him, and, as a result, some difficulty had been made as to his researches at the Record Office being allowed to continue. This constituted his claim for 'damages.'

"I wished to insert in the next number of the *Cornhill* a brief explanation with an expression of regret; but Sir John Coleridge, afterwards Lord Chief Justice, our counsel—Sir John Karslake being, unfortunately for me, unable to undertake the case—who had seen some correspondence between the General's Solicitors and our own, in which General Plantagenet Harrison's strange pretensions were avowed, insisted that the whole business was a farce, and that nothing need be done. When the 'General' went into the witness-box, he swore, *inter alia*, that he was the rightful King of England. His examination and cross-examination were really very amusing. In his evidence, he admitted that he had been in some trouble in Spain about a bill which he had left at a bank for collection; that he had been escorted out of Spain and imprisoned at Gibraltar; that, rightly or wrongly, he believed himself to be descended from the Earl of Westmorland and the Plantagenets. His cross-examination by the Solicitor-General, as reported in the *Times*, revealed still more extraordinary claims :—

"You really believe, I understand, that you are the heir-general of Henry VI. ?—Yes, I do.

"And that you are the rightful Duke of Lancaster, Normandy and Aquitaine ?—Yes, I am.

"And that your title has been recognised by the Queen under the Great Seal ?—Yes, in a license to Sir F. Thesiger as Queen's Counsel to plead for me.

"Her Majesty has not recognised your title in any more formal document ?—No.

"It would be rather awkward for Her Majesty if she had, would it not ?—Well, I don't know.

"Pray, have you asserted that you are Count of Angoulême, Flanders, Anjou, Alsace and Champagne ?—Yes.

"And of Kent ?—Yes, but that was some years ago.

"In his re-examination his counsel asked :

"You have worked out your pedigree ?—Yes, I have.

"And you believe it ?—Yes, and I can prove it.

"After this evidence I thought we were safe, for I supposed that a crank of this quality must fare ill with the jury.

"The writer of the article, Mr. G. H. B. Young, went into the witness-box and said that the story, or the materials for it, was told him in 1851, when he was at Madrid, by an English gentleman who was generally known as 'Don Ricardo.' The name of 'Plantagenet Harrison' was mentioned to him as that of a man travelling under that name. At the time he believed the name to be fictitious. He so believed until the plaintiff made his complaint, and down to that time he never heard of such a person as General Plantagenet Harrison, nor did he suppose at the time he wrote the article that it would apply to any living person of the name.

"Mr. Justice Lush, in summing up, told the jury that even although the writer of the article was not aware of the existence of the plaintiff, yet, as he had in fact named him and had attached these imputations to his name and character, he was legally liable.

"The jury returned a verdict for the plaintiff, and assessed the damages at £50. I must confess the verdict took me by surprise, and I can only suppose that Sir John Coleridge's attempt to scornfully laugh the case out of court, irritated the jury."

CHAPTER XIV

THE "CORNHILL" CONTINUED—AFTER THACKERAY

To quote further from the *Reminiscences* of George Smith:—

"When Thackeray resigned the editorship, the conduct of the magazine was put, so to speak, in commission. Mr. Frederick Greenwood, Mr. G. H. Lewes, and myself, formed a sort of editorial committee, Mr. Greenwood doing the greater part of the work. He became the editor (when Lewes retired in 1864) and held that office four years, relinquishing it in 1868, because his time was fully occupied by the *Pall Mall Gazette*. The magazine was then again put into commission, Mr. Lewes, Mr. Dutton Cook, and myself carrying it on till 1871. Then on Dutton Cook's retirement Mr. Leslie Stephen became its editor, and held that post till the end of 1882, when his work on the 'Dictionary of National Biography' became too engrossing. We continued through all these years the policy of obtaining for the *Cornhill*, regardless of cost, the very best literature that could be procured."

For many years he kept his own record of the articles and illustrations published, of the authors and artists and the payments made to them, of the numbers sold of each monthly issue and each bound volume for the year. All was entered neatly in his minute handwriting in a series of little notebooks bound in green leather, which, with the larger notebooks recording the articles accepted or in type, to-day provide the working data for the early history of *Cornhill*.

But though George Smith modestly speaks of a "commission" of managers during this period, he himself seems to have been the main directing power, "The Carnot of our Recent Great Victories," as Thackeray called him, whether the name of editor was conferred on another or not. Anthony Trollope, who

remarks: "What I wrote for the *Cornhill Magazine* I always wrote at the instigation of Mr. Smith," declares that throughout the 'sixties the real guidance of the magazine was entirely in his hands ("Autobiography," ii. 125). At all events, it was he who secured most of the important contributions during the later part of that period—Charles Dickens' memorial article on Thackeray; serials from his friends Mrs. Gaskell and Wilkie Collins and Charles Reade and Miss Thackeray ("The Village on the Cliff," as well as "The Story of Elizabeth"); Charles Lever's three stories, and Meredith's "Harry Richmond."

With the accession of Leslie Stephen, he left the editorial management safely in his hands.

High as the literary quality of the *Cornhill* remained, its vast sales and great financial success gradually waned. The loss of Thackeray's popular name as editor, so soon to be followed by his death, was a severe blow. Serials became less popular in proportion as the number of novels published increased, until, as was admitted thirty years later by James Payn, who once had the credit of sending up the circulation of *Chambers' Journal* by 20,000 through his "Lost Sir Massingberd," "It is only in the rarest cases that a magazine can be benefited by a serial." Competition became more strenuous, firstly from Reviews, which dealt not only with current politics, but also with the literary topics that were the special feature of the *Cornhill*; secondly, from new magazines approximating in various degrees to the *Cornhill* scheme with less and lighter literary material and more of fiction; and thirdly, from the cheap illustrated magazines, which, coming into existence with the process block, made their appeal through the eye as well as through more sensational letter-press. Thus ensued, so to say, a pulling apart of the two stools on which the *Cornhill* was seated, and the general public to which it had first appealed was split into several parts.

When Leslie Stephen became editor, the circulation of the *Cornhill* was not a fifth of the initial number which had so

exhilarated its founders : when he retired it had fallen to 12,000.

As James Payn wrote of the change then inaugurated : " The fact is, it was chiefly the failure of the literary, and especially the classical, essay to attract the public that compelled us to attempt a more popular *Cornhill*."

The essay, that is, the treatment of a subject " in the temper of humane letters," was a cardinal feature of the *Cornhill* from the outset, and in its continuance under successive editors lay the continuity of the *Cornhill* tradition. Various as the subjects must inevitably be which are assembled in the pages of a magazine, and various also the individual methods of their writers, the critic, looking through the *Cornhill*, is conscious of a certain note common to all, making, if one may say so, the soul of the magazine. " The note of the *Cornhill*," wrote one of the most discriminating and sympathetic of these critics, Sir E. T. Cook, " is the literary note in the widest sense of the term ; its soul is the spirit of that humane culture, as Matthew Arnold describes it, in the pages, reprinted from the *Cornhill*, of ' Culture and Anarchy.' " Thackeray led the way with his " Roundabout Papers," " models," as Leslie Stephen said, " of the essay which, without aiming at profundity, gives the charm of the graceful and tender conversation of a great writer." The *Cornhill* has never forgotten the Thackeray touch.

Besides the 28 " Roundabout Papers" which appeared in the first 32 numbers of the *Cornhill*, Thackeray contributed four detached essays and the historical studies entitled " The Four Georges." G. H. Lewes began his series " Studies in Animal Life " in the first number, and contributed 10 articles in the first four years. In the second half of 1860 we note Sir John Kaye (10 papers in three years) and Sir James Fitzjames Stephen, with 18 articles in 30 months, many of them on points of law and history. Richard Doyle also, commonly known as " Dicky " Doyle, contributes many papers, mostly on the lighter side of social life, from 1861 onwards.

But above all these looms one who was to become more and more a leader in literature and emancipated thought : Matthew Arnold, with whose work the *Cornhill* was to be specially connected from the first year of its existence. For in July 1860 appeared the first of several critical studies, "Men of Genius," to be followed by "Eugénie de Guérin," "Heinrich Heine," and "The Literary Influence of Academies on the Spirit and Literature of Nations." Then, after "Pagan and Christian Sentiment" (1864) and "My Countrymen" (1866), there appeared in 1866, 1868, 1869, and 1871 respectively the essays which, republished in book form as "Celtic Literature," "Culture and Anarchy," "St. Paul and Protestantism," and "Literature and Dogma," were to carry the gospel of "sweetness and light" far and wide. Of these the last falls under the editorship of Leslie Stephen, together with "A Persian Passion Play," December 1871, and "A Speech at Eton," 1879.

Though the literary character of the *Cornhill* was so brilliantly stamped on it from the outset, the palmiest days of the essay in literature and literary criticism lay under Leslie Stephen. Before he became editor, he had begun to contribute, and former essayists, such as Matthew Arnold, James Hannay, Grenville Murray, a copious contributor, especially on French topics, from 1868 to 1882, Alexander Innes Shand, long a leader-writer on the *Times*, and T. E. Kebbel, afterwards of the *Standard*, continued under his editorship. Now, however, began his long series of "Hours in a Library," as well as many other essays which were not signed. He enlisted the aid of Sir Sidney Colvin, John Addington Symonds, Edmund Gosse, Andrew Lang, Robert Louis Stevenson, Churton Collins, Edward Dowden, James Sully, and Herman Merivale, as well as the earlier and less remembered writers, the Rev. J. M. Capes, G. A. Simcox, who wrote especially on classical subjects, James Mew, a fertile discourser *de omnibus rebus*, and George Barnett Smith, whose chief line was literary criticism.

Essays there are also from Mrs. Lynn Linton, a champion of

feminism, and Miss Frances Power Cobbe, a liberal-minded thinker and a philozoist whose tenderness for our animal friends ran somewhat fanatically to seed. Mr. D. C. Lathbury contributed several essays; Sir Henry Maine appears in 1871 and "Vernon Lee" in 1878 and 1880, while the versatile Grant Allen contributed at least 19 papers between 1877 and 1881 dealing with curious problems of biology and extending into the neighbouring field of mind and its activities which even in primitive man find expression in art and language. But scientific subjects which, from the first, had been treated by G. H. Lewes, James Hinton, Dr. Anstie, and D. T. Ansted, were most prominently represented from 1868 to 1882 by the astronomer, Richard A. Proctor. I have counted fifty essays of his, ranging from questions of physical science, especially astronomy, to mental problems of thought and illusions.

The name of James Payn, editor from 1883 to 1896, is associated with the radical effort to re-popularise the magazine.

James Payn was just upon 45 when he came to Smith, Elder, fresh from a 17 years' editorship of *Chambers' Journal*, the first year as co-editor with the Leitch Ritchie, who formerly had edited "Friendship's Offering" and the early series of six-shilling novels for Smith, Elder. Payn had already published a score of novels, well written and skilfully constructed, and from the time he was 25 had been a constant contributor not only to *Chambers' Journal* but to *Household Words*, where, indeed, he had first come under the notice of Dickens when he was but 16 years old, on account of an article depicting Woolwich Academy from within, which provoked the wrath of the military authorities.

In 1861 he migrated from Edinburgh to London, editing *Chambers' Journal* from there, until William Chambers succeeded Robert, and differences arising between them, Payn resigned his post.

Payn had long wished to enter into a "mutually beneficial"

arrangement with the vigorous young firm of Smith, Elder. Even before his migration to London, and again in 1867, I find letters proposing that Smith, Elder should publish novels of his. As in several other cases, such as "*East Lynne*," Smith Williams judged that previous serialisation elsewhere would leave no purchasers for the 31s. 6d. book, and in 1867, moreover, H. S. King added that the firm had "withdrawn from any great publication of novels."

By a happy conjuncture Payn's retirement from *Chambers'* was closely followed by the aged Smith Williams' retirement from Smith, Elder, and on Leslie Stephen's recommendation his place was taken by James Payn, who had two eminent qualifications for the post. He was a prolific and skilful writer of essays and still more of fiction, with a keen eye for inventing plots and a critical knowledge of the writer's art. In his bibliography no less than 69 volumes, mostly fiction, stand to his credit. On the other hand, he was generously eager to discover talent, to aid beginners with his counsel, and help them to win recognition. As Mr. Stanley Weyman wrote, after Payn's death :—

"I owed very much to the stimulus given me by Payn when he sat in that room of yours. Indeed but for his encouragement I doubt if I should have had the pluck to venture on any prolonged work. And I know that many others ought to say the same."

For four and twenty years he continued as literary adviser to the firm, and from 1883-1896 was also editor of the *Cornhill*, working in that familiar second-floor room with its two windows looking out from between the big red columns of the façade upon Waterloo Place. The third window on this floor belonged to a small room, once no doubt a dressing-room, which communicated with the larger room. Here in old days a bed would be made up to accommodate Matthew Arnold when he was kept in town too late to get out to Harrow or to Cobham. Later it was the working-room of the clerk who kept the *Cornhill* records and attended to the routine business of the magazine.

Over the mantelpiece in the larger room where, as it was said, "he smoked innumerable pipes and wrote innumerable novels," James Payn's occupancy was ever after kept in memory by a pen-and-ink drawing of him seated before his desk in the easy comfort of a dressing-gown, and turning round to face his visitor, with pen and pipe well in evidence.

Of his readership George Smith writes :—

"Payn came to Waterloo Place for a short and agreed term, in order that he might see how the work suited him ; and that I, too, might judge how I liked his work. He remained at that post for some 24 years. Our relations were always most cordial, and there was a certain amount of intimacy between our families. Payn had an acute judgment for literature of the lighter order ; but he soon got out of his depth and he lacked what may be called intellectual courage. He was afraid of experiments. I don't know how many times I have made him almost jump out of his chair by mentioning sums I proposed to pay for books. The dialogue between us as publisher and reader, usually ran like this : ' Well, my dear Payn, if the book is all that you say, it is worth that or it is worth nothing.' ' Oh, but,' Payn would remonstrate, ' I may be mistaken !' etc. He lacked courage, in a word, to back his judgment, and grew frightened when I backed it too boldly. He made several successful hits in the way of discovering authors of promise, and one or two writers who are now extremely popular—Dr. Conan Doyle, Stanley Weyman, H. S. Merriman and others—attribute much of their success to the cordial encouragement Payn gave them before they had attained any standing as authors. We differed in our judgment on F. Anstey's ' Vice Versa,' a book which became famous. I myself could discover no reason, in advance, why the book should be any great success ; but Payn, in his capacity of publisher's ' reader,' showed much more than his usual confidence of judgment in favour of the book ; and it need hardly be said that his judgment turned out to be right. The sale of the book was enormous. ' John Inglesant ' was one of Payn's failures. The book ran on lines which were strange to Payn : and he reported unfavourably upon it, with the result that I declined its publication, and missed a big publishing success.

Payn completely forgot the circumstance that he had advised me to decline 'John Inglesant,' and was immensely indignant when he saw it reported in the papers that 'John Inglesant' had been offered to Smith, Elder & Co. and declined by them. He came to me in anger, declared the statement was a reflection on his literary judgment, and insisted on writing to contradict the statement. He has himself told with ingenious changes of names the story of that interview in a charming fashion in his 'Literary Recollections,' and I venture to reproduce his version of it here :—

"While upon the subject of publishers, I will narrate a story told me by one of that useful and innocuous class called "Readers." He was in the great house of Paternoster, Row & Co., but (one cannot but think fortunately for him) Row was dead. One day my friend received one of those charming brochures so common now-a-days, full of ill-natured gossip about literature and its disciples. Among other disagreeable things, it said that the eminently successful work "Disloyala : or the Doubtful Priest," which had run through fifty editions, had been rejected by his house some years ago. He showed this libel with much indignation to his friend and employer, Mr. Paternoster.

" "Is not this," he cried, "an infamous statement ? "

" "What *does* it matter ? " was the quiet reply ; " this sort of gentleman will say anything."

" "But I really can't stand it," persisted the Reader. " It is a gross libel upon us both, but especially upon me ; I shall write to the man and give him a piece of my mind."

" "I wouldn't do that if I were you," said Mr. Paternoster, still more quietly than before.

" "But why not ? I really must—— "

" "There was a twinkle in Mr. Paternoster's eye, and a smile at the extreme corners of his mouth, which attracted the other's attention, and interrupted his eloquence.

" "Is there any reason why I should not contradict this man ? "

" "Well, yes ; the fact is we did reject the book."

" "What ? Do you mean to say I rejected 'Disloyala ? ' "

" "I am afraid so ; at all events we did it amongst us. I don't blame you ; I think it even now a dullish book."

" "And you never told me ? Never let fall a word of it all these years ? "

“ “Certainly not. I thought it might distress you. I should not have told you now, but that I was taken unawares.”

“ “This to my mind is one of the prettiest stories I have ever heard. I should like to see the General who could be equally reticent, when the Chief of his Intelligence Department had omitted a precaution that would have secured him a victory ; or the solicitor who had lost his cause through the neglect of his counsel ; or the politician who had missed his point in the House through the shortcoming of his secretary. Yet Mr. Paternoster was a publisher, one of that fraternity who, if we are to believe some people, are incapable of a generosity. For my part (who have collected a considerable number of anecdotes of the human race) I have never heard a more creditable story, even of a Divine.’

“ It is only fair to say that ‘ John Inglesant ’ came to us in a manner not calculated to excite much friendly expectation, or even to justify a very careful reading. It was sent to us by a Manchester bookseller, one of our country customers, accompanied by a half-apologetic request that it might be looked at, and a suitable letter written which could be shown to the author. It was pretty obvious from the bookseller’s letter that he did not think very highly either of the MS. or of its author ; and the manner of its introduction perhaps unconsciously biassed Payn’s judgment against ‘ John Inglesant.’ ”

It may be added, as another curiosity of literature, that Messrs. Macmillan, who ultimately published the book, were among those who at first refused it. After all the rejections, Mr. and Mrs. Shorthouse published fifty copies in vellum at their own expense, and sent them to friends. One went to Mr. Gladstone, who made the book ; another to Mr. Kekewich. It was after this that the Macmillans made a good offer for the book and undertook the publication.

Payn’s handwriting, the result of arthritis in the fingers, was proverbial, rivalling the bad pre-eminence of Dean Stanley’s. The story goes that he once rejected an article, but the contributor cited his letter as proof of acceptance, and as Payn could not read it, he was constrained to accept his interpretation. The

writer of the article on Great Publishing Houses in *T. P.'s Weekly* for October 25, 1912, states that he "has seen such a letter accepting for the *Cornhill* the first short story of Mr. Cutcliffe Hyne. And certainly it was next to impossible to read it. As the MS. did not accompany it, and as the story duly appeared, the interpretation cannot be challenged."

A great part of James Payn's influence came from his genius for friendship. Without doubt he was the most popular man of letters of his time. His friends were many, beginning with Charles Dickens and his literary circle of the 'fifties; and to the last his "singularly *bright* geniality" continued to make him new friends. Not even the constant pain and depression, due to growing ill-health, could dim his flow of good stories and his *joie de vivre*, although he could exclaim "Health, health, health—nothing else seems worth having to poor me."

When his retirement seemed to be foreshadowed in 1896 by his article "The Backwater of Life," the sheaves of letters he received from his old contributors—many of them, he was ashamed to confess, quite forgotten—touched him deeply. They, at least, had not forgotten his invariable kindness.

After 1894, Payn was more and more crippled by his rheumatism and confined to his house in Warrington Crescent, but he continued to read many MSS. for the firm, and from his long experience gave much sound advice to the new partner, Reginald Smith, whether in the choice of MSS., the comparative merits of authors, or possible contributors to a projected series of short novels.

His old friendship with the head of the house flowered anew in his relations with Reginald Smith, who often visited him in these days. After one of these visits in December 1894, Payn wrote: "When I say that your kindness and consideration reminded me of your father-in-law's relations with me, you will know what I mean."

The last scene—the sunset glow of James Payn's friendships

—is characteristic of the affection he inspired. From his undergraduate days he had been a brilliant whist player, and in London his main recreation was his daily rubber. When he could no longer go down to his club, some of his fellow-members arranged to come twice a week and play whist with him at his home.

Though he was so crippled that he could hardly deal, his faculty for the game was quite unimpaired, and his enjoyment of it unlessened.

"Torn with almost continuous suffering, he bore it," continues George Smith, "with amazing courage and with a serene patience, beautiful to see. His wife used to say that sometimes, when he was sitting racked with pain until the tears stood in his eyes, a friend would be announced. Payn instantly rallied his courage and cheerfulness, and she had stood outside the door and listened with amazement to the jests and laughter of her husband, who, only a few moments before, had been almost broken down with physical anguish."

It has been noticed that Payn was quick to discern new talent, especially in fiction. For the *Cornhill* he picked out a number of new writers who gained the popular ear. Most of them began with short stories. Of the serials which obtained large success, the list shows F. Anstey—"The Giant's Robe"; Baring Gould—"Court Royal," "The Gaverocks," and "Mrs. Curgenvén of Curgenvén"; George Gissing—"A Life's Morning"; Sarah Tytler (Miss Keddie), a previous contributor of short stories—"French Janet"; Rider Haggard—"Jess"; R. E. Forrest—"Eight Days"; E. W. Hornung—"A Bride from the Bush"; Conan Doyle—"The White Company"; Stanley Weyman—"The New Rector"; Henry Seton Merriman—"The Slave of the Lamp," "With Edged Tools," and "The Sowers"; S. R. Crockett—"Cleg Kelly."

But the new series of the magazine did not realise the high hopes with which it was launched. The 47,000 sold of the first number was considerably less than had been prepared for, but even that fell rapidly and continuously; after three years

illustrations were dropped, and finally, at the close of James Payn's régime, the sales were substantially lower than they had been when his predecessor resigned. He also had fallen between two stools.

James Payn was succeeded by Mr. St. Loe Strachey, 1896-8; then followed the 17½ years of Reginald Smith's editorship. The retirement of James Payn preluded the abandonment of the sixpenny *Cornhill*. He had turned the *Cornhill* mainly into a repository of high-class fiction with a smaller proportion of essays and general articles, in hopes of recapturing the larger public which had turned from too intellectual fare to cruder founts of romance and sensationalism. But experience showed once more that while retaining high literary quality, it could not compete with the more sensational illustrated sixpennies. The problem then arose to create a special public in the more cultivated circles; to return more or less to the older scheme, emphasizing the literary side so as to be less ponderous than its more costly competitors, yet free from the "illiterate flippancy" of the cheaper magazines. At all events, the essay on classical subjects must be avoided. It had turned away many readers from the first series. As James Payn sagely remarked in 1894, "Our present public world would, I am convinced, be even less disposed to it. Unlike Dr. Johnson's young waterman who was willing to 'give what he had' to learn about the Golden Fleece, it would not give twopence to hear about the Athenian Fleet." The only drawback to this excellent scheme was the smallness of the special public appealed to; for by universal consent of those qualified to judge, the *Cornhill*, in its latest series, has been of constant excellence, maintaining unsurpassed its high standard of substance and literary form alike in fiction and in the essays and general articles which are the larger part of its substance.

An unexpected factor in this disappointment was the traditional, almost legendary glamour of the old *Cornhill* as compared with the less weight of metal carried by the second series. It

was a catchword picked up from their elders and repeated parrot-wise by innumerable people—who has not met them?—to say : “ Oh, yes ! The dear old *Cornhill* ! What good things there used to be in it. I never see it now.” And they were just the people who would have enjoyed the third series and pronounced it as good as anything in the old days if they had ever troubled to look at it.

The actual circulation fell lower than during either of the preceding periods. Thus, as a matter of pounds, shillings and pence, the *Cornhill* remained unremunerative ; indirectly, however, its enduring literary excellence was not only among the imponderables which gave prestige to the firm, but possessed a more ponderable value in attracting good authors to Waterloo Place.

However, a larger recognition came to the *Cornhill* in the course of the Great War. Was it that the protracted stress tuned men’s mind afresh ? Reginald Smith lived to see the turn of the tide.

Meantime, similar magazines, such as *Temple Bar* and Macmillan’s and Longman’s and Murray’s, one and all went down under the same stress ; the *Cornhill* alone kept its flag flying—not unscathed.

To speak more in detail of the third series : the price returned to 1s., the old-time plan of illustrating the serials was not renewed, albeit occasionally meditated. The number of pages was brought up to a regular 144, until the pressure of war conditions caused a reduction. While the cardinal feature of the serial remained, two serials very generally appearing at the same time, a larger proportion of first-class literary and general articles was included.

As regards serials, there was no breach with the second series. Three of James Payn’s most successful younger contributors carried on the tradition : Merriman with “ In Kedar’s Tents,” “ The Isle of Unrest,” and “ Barlasch of the Guard ” ;

Mr. Stanley Weyman with "The Castle Inn," "Count Hannibal," and "Chippinge"; Mr. Crockett with "Little Anna Mark"; and, if it be not reckoned in effect a new start after the lapse of 14 years since "Bessie Costrell," Mrs. Humphry Ward with "Canadian Born," "The Case of Richard Meynell," and "Lady Connie."

The new recruits were as follows: A. E. W. Mason, "The Four Feathers," "The Truants," and "The Broken Road"; Anthony Hope—"The Intrusions of Peggy"; Agnes and Egerton Castle—"Rose of the World," "Wroth," "The Lost Iphigenia," and "The Grip of Life"; Mrs. Margaret L. Woods—"The King's Revoke"; the Author of "Elizabeth and her German Garden" with "Fräulein Schmidt and Mr. Anstruther"; Halliwell Sutcliffe with "Priscilla of the Good Intent"; Mrs. Henry de la Pasture (Lady Clifford)—"Catherine's Child" and "Michael Ferrys"; Horace Annesley Vachell—"The Paladin," "Blinds Down," and "Spragge's Canyon"; E. F. Benson—"The Osbornes" and "Thorley Weir"; George A. Birmingham—"The Major's Niece" and "The Lost Tribes"; Eden Phillpotts—"The Flint Heart"; Mrs. David Ritchie—"Two Sinners"; Mary Roberts Rinehart—"K"; Paul and Victor Margueritte, translated by S. G. Tallentyre—"Strasbourg." Add to these the posthumous work of Charles Kingsley completed by his daughter, Lucas Malet—"The Tutor's Story."

The latter was one of the most curious and interesting "finds" of the *Cornhill*. The tale had been begun by Charles Kingsley about the period of the "Water Babies"; what had been written was not continuous, but consisted of various striking scenes which gave an obvious clue to the course of the whole. Reconstructing the story from these fragments and adding about twice as much material of her own, his daughter achieved a real *tour de force*. The story rang true with Charles Kingsley's authentic note from beginning to end; to detect the joins and the new material was impossible.

Leaving fiction, we find, in addition to a vast store of single articles on literary and critical subjects, a large number of literary series, such as "Pages from a Private Diary" (1897), "Conferences on Books and Men" (1899), and "Provincial Letters" (1901-5-8), by Canon Beeching; "The Etchingham Letters," 1898, by Sir F. Pollock and Mrs. Fuller Maitland; "The Blackstick Papers," from 1900 to 1907, by Lady Ritchie; "A Londoner's Logbook" (1901-2), by the Rt. Hon. G. W. E. Russell; "Alms for Oblivion," by Richard Garnett (1901-4); "From a College Window" (1905), "At Large" (1907), and "The Leaves of the Tree" (1910), by A. C. Benson; "The Book on the Table" (1908), by Virginia Stephen; and "The New Parent's Assistant" (1914), by Stephen Paget.

To these may be added the series of a dozen "Examination papers" in standard authors by various hands in 1911, under the general title of ominous import: "At the Sign of the Plough." Prizes were awarded to the winners of these competitions, which certainly added to the amusement and interest of readers, though the inevitable little difficulties arose occasionally with competitors who thought their claims had been overlooked.

The years, as they came round, provided occasion for many anniversary studies of men and events; bulking larger than those were regular historical series, such as Dr. W. H. Fitchett's "Fights for the Flag" (1898) and "Tale of the Great Mutiny" (1901); Andrew Lang's "Historical Mysteries" (1904); "Tarpaulin Captains," by John Barnett, the pen name of John R. Stagg, who fell in the war; a set of historical romances by Marjorie Bowen; and from 1915, out of the War itself, Boyd Cable's two series, "Between the Lines" and "The Old Contemptibles."

Mrs. Woods' "Pastels under the Southern Cross" (1910) were a travel series; there were continuous chapters of reminiscence from Karl Blind, "In Years of Storm and Stress" (1898); Sir John Robinson wrote of South Africa (1899); Lady

Broom's "Colonial Memories" appeared in 1903; and Sir Henry Lucy's "Sixty Years in the Wilderness" and its continuation, "Nearing Jordan," in 1912 and 1914 respectively.

Science was specially represented by W. A. Shenstone, F.R.S., whose successive articles from 1905 formed the nucleus of his subsequent books, "The New Chemistry" and "The New Physics."

The old interest of the original *Cornhill* in social questions took new shape in such series as "Family Budgets" (1901), "Prospects in the Professions" (1902), and "Household Budgets Abroad" (1904).

Another notable feature of the *Cornhill* in these days was the "miniature biographies" of men of letters, personal sketches of a friend by a sympathetic friend, which possessed a larger human interest than the ordinary obituary notice. A parallel may be drawn between these and Mr. A. C. Benson's "Leaves of the Tree" already mentioned, the latter being a series of impressions of notable men who had had an influence on his life.

On January 1, 1910, the *Cornhill* could look back on the completion of fifty years of life. Of its contemporaries and younger co-rivals who tried to beat out literary paths in the popular field, not one survived. One after another the shilling magazines had fallen out. Their special public, never really large enough to support them all satisfactorily, was still further thinned by the lure of the sixpennies.

Only the prestige of the *Cornhill* and the attraction it exercised upon the literary world made its continuance materially worth while.

The occasion was celebrated by the issue of a Jubilee number, No. 163 of the New Series, for January 1910. Within, it had 32 pages more than the customary 144; without, it was adorned with a stiffer cover in white, with the familiar design printed in orange upon the white, an effect very charming and delicate. In addition to the ordinary bill of fare, the list included nine special

contributions to celebrate the occasion, personal reminiscence and verse and critical history :—

“The First Editor : and the Founder,” by Lady Ritchie. (With an unpublished Portrait of Thackeray by Samuel Laurence, and Two Facsimile Letters.)

“An Impromptu to the Editor.” By Thomas Hardy.

“The Jubilee of the *Cornhill*.” By E. T. Cook. (With a Facsimile.)

“On Essays at Large.” By Arthur C. Benson.

“Leslie Stephen, Editor.” By W. E. Norris.

“James Payn, Editor.” By Stanley J. Weyman. (With a Facsimile.)

“How I came to Know the *Cornhill*.” By Dr. W. H. Fitchett.

“Middle Age to—Youth.” By A. D. Godley.

“Envoi.” By Mrs. George Smith. (With a Portrait of the Founder.)

The sum total produced a very perfect impression of the true *Cornhill* spirit and the personality of its creators and guides, the essential value of which, as one reads it anew, seems hardly to fade with the passage of the years.

Six months later, the Jubilee found another and a private celebration, the charm of which will never be forgotten by those who were privileged to attend it. After dinner on June 30, the guests at 11, Green Street, found a stage prepared in the drawing-room. Here was played with felicitous spirit and charm “The Contributor’s Dream,” written for the Jubilee of the *Cornhill* by Mrs. Henry de la Pasture. Characters :—A Poet, Hon. Stephen Powys ; A Maid of All Work, Mrs. Henry de la Pasture ; The Editor of *The Twentieth Century*, The Earl of Altamont ; The Editor of the *Daily Surprise Packet*, Mr. Edward Eliot ; The Editress of the *Gentler Sex*, Miss Agnes Bowen ; First Publisher, Mr. Philip Antrobus ; Second Publisher, Lord Clifford of Chudleigh ; An American Agent, Mr. Harold Whitaker ; Stella, Miss Edmée de la Pasture.

The struggling poet in his sorry attic is divided between visionary dreams of Stella, his ideal, and the waking vision of his maid of all work, whose simple fellow feeling for youth and struggle, alas ! butters no parsnips. The dreams that bring Stella before him bring also visitants of golden promise in the person of two publishers seeking his work and a dashing American Literary agent. Perishable Hopes ! They are shattered as reality enters with the maid of all work, bringing him—a bill ? No ! The modest reality outweighs the gorgeous dreams. It is a letter from the Editor of the *Cornhill*, accepting a poem of his for those august pages.

The Jubilee of the *Cornhill* was followed the next year by the centenary of Thackeray's birth. There were three celebrations in which Reginald Smith was specially concerned. One was a Thackeray dinner on May 26, 1911, in the hall of the Middle Temple, which Thackeray had entered in 1831 for his brief legal career.

Next, came the exhibition of Thackerayana at the Charterhouse where he helped Lady Ritchie in the collection and arrangement of her contribution.

Then on July 18, by permission of the Master Treasurer and the Benchers of the Middle Temple, Lady Ritchie and Reginald Smith gave a garden party in the garden and hall of the Middle Temple, for which it may be recorded 1955 invitations were sent out. The glamour of being received by Thackeray's daughter was heightened by the perfection of the summer afternoon, which made a paradise of those London gardens, and almost made one hesitate to leave the outdoor delights down to the Punch and Judy show provided for the children who came with their parents, and to enter the Hall and hear Dr. Walford Davies and his choir first render three songs of Thackeray's, "At the Church Gate," "The Mahogany Tree," and "Little Billee," and then complete Mr. Cyril Maude's reading of the scene where Colonel Newcome revisits Evans' by singing

“ Wapping Old Stairs ” as the Colonel sang it on that memorable occasion.

The fortunes of the *Cornhill* during the Great War deserve special notice. The material difficulties in respect of paper, printers' labour and binding, the cost of which by the middle of the war had risen 300 per cent., were met by a reduction in size first to 128, then to 112 pages, while the price was moved from 1s. ordinary to 1s. net.

The most interesting point, however, is that the circulation began very soon to rise. In the tension of those days, when men's minds were concentrated on the issues of life and death instead of being drawn hither and thither by the petty distractions of former times, they seem to have found increasing solace and satisfaction in good literature—good material well presented. Nor was this only at home. Many were the messages of appreciation that came from soldiers at the front, and by a curious swing of the pendulum it would sometimes happen that a householder asked by his son to send out the *Cornhill*, would read his copy first and become a subscriber himself.

One of the oddest episodes of the *Cornhill* in the war was that told by Miss Q. Scott-Hopper. Her centenary article on Lord Collingwood, Nelson's second-in-command at Trafalgar, a native of her own town, Whitley Bay, had appeared in the *Cornhill* for March 1910. One day in 1915 as the Northumberland Fusiliers were attacking a trench in Gallipoli, a sheet of printed paper was blown to them by the wind from the Turkish line. One of the men picked it up and stuffed it into his tunic. Returning to his own lines, he examined the paper. It was a page of the *Cornhill*, the last page of the Hardy article. Strange to say, he himself came from Whitley Bay, and recognised the name of the writer as that of a neighbour. His padre, appealed to, managed to trace out the connection, and sent the much-travelled page with a letter to the astonished author.

What was its history that it should have drifted into a Turkish trench?

I may be permitted to mention another, and to me a very touching episode connected with an article called "A Southern Journey," which pictured a period of rest between two great battles, leaving behind it a sense of beauty, of calm strength and ultimate refreshment of spirit.* N., most silent and reserved of youths, received this along with other *Cornhills* from a faithful correspondent when his mind was full of the grave imaginings that haunt the days preceding a great attack. He was so deeply moved by it that he broke through his habitual reserve and wrote a long letter revealing much of his inmost feelings, and quoting at length certain passages which had brought him strength and calm and contentment whatever the fate that was to be his. He came through that attack only to be posted among the missing a few months later. The *Cornhill* is grateful that it was the means of bringing him light in his dark hour.

The war brought the *Cornhill* several new writers as well as stirring up old contributors to fresh efforts. Among these let me name first Boyd Cable. His first appearance in *Cornhill* was in July 1914 with a sea story entitled "Pride of Service," appropriately to the nautical jest in his pen name. The warm appreciation of the *Cornhill* led not only to the brilliant succession of war stories in the magazine—"The Old Contemptibles" and "Between the Lines" and others which have appeared in book form—but to a cordial friendship between author and editor.

Of life in the Fleet and actual fighting excellent accounts were given by "Fleet Surgeon" and the midshipman who spent his 17th birthday on the *Carnarvon* in battle at the Falklands; both, however, were subsequently silenced by the censor, and the *Cornhill* was robbed of the earliest and most vivid account of the

* This was Wilfrid Ewart's first venture in literature. Alas! that his gifted life has just been cut short by a chance bullet in Mexico City (Xmas, 1922).

Battle of Jutland. At this time also Bennet Copplestone contributed the first of many naval articles which were to become a notable feature of the magazine.

From the field came Captain Herbert Maddick of the 5th (Royal Irish) Lancers, who told a moving tale of the cavalry fighting in the Retreat. Captain Maddick escaped Mons to fall a victim to the climate of Mesopotamia, where he served with marked ability on the staff of General MacMunn, another old friend of the *Cornhill*. He was sent home only to die the day after his landing in England.

Early also appeared Jeffery E. Jeffery, a gunner, who had fallen into the hands of the Germans desperately wounded, had been exchanged as incurable, and recovered to fight again : his excellent tales appeared afterwards in book form under the title of "Servants of the Guns."

The plain tale of the fighting routine in "An Officer's Day," doubly effective in its anonymity and absence of embroidery, was from the pen of Lt. (afterwards Major) Jack Murray Smith, of the Royal Horse Guards.

H. Warner Allen, official press correspondent, contributed impressions of the Western line which formed part of his subsequent book, "The Unbroken Front." Mrs. M. E. Clarke wrote of early days in Paris. Mrs. Norway wrote of the Sinn Fein Rebellion as she saw it in Dublin ; "The Toll-house," by Evelyn St. Leger, set forth with a measure of sentiment exceptional in the *Cornhill*, if permissible under the circumstances, the story of how the war made itself felt in the tranquil life of an English village.

Of singular interest were the articles of Mr. Frank Hoyt Gaylor on the Relief work of the American Commission in Belgium under the hateful German régime.

But the fullest development of war stories, by land and sea and air, and of the sufferings of wounded prisoners and the tales of some who escaped, comes after the date with which this chronicle closes, Christmas 1916.

CHAPTER XV

"CORNHILL" ARTISTS

OF the artists who were *Cornhill* contributors, several became close friends of George Smith—Millais above all. They had often met at the Ruskins', and a warm intimacy had grown up between them.

From Herne Hill "Millais and I," writes George Smith, "used generally to go home together, and I can recollect his astonishment when I parted with him at 10 o'clock at night on one of the bridges, and told him I was off to the City to do five hours' work."

When the *Cornhill* was launched, George Smith asked Millais to illustrate "Framley Parsonage."

"It almost turned Trollope's head to have his book enriched with the pencil of such an artist. . . . Millais' illustrations (as he says in his Autobiography) helped to make more vivid and real to his own imagination the character of his own novels; more conscientious work, he declares, was never done by man than by Millais in these illustrations. Millais also illustrated 'The Small House at Allington' for the *Cornhill*, and made some beautiful drawings for the *edition de luxe* of Thackeray's works."

George Smith tells the closing scene of their long friendship as a token of the bright courage of the man :—

"He sent for me a few days before he died. He could not speak owing to a recent dreadful operation on his throat. But the extraordinary courage he had shown all through his illness still shone in his eyes. He took a slate, and with his feeble fingers, scrawled a few sentences on it, asking if I could remember

the fun we had had together on such and such an occasion, and with so and so."

With Leighton, acquaintance began through the fact that he was distantly connected with Mrs. Smith. Thackeray suggested "the handsome young painter" as an illustrator for the *Cornhill*, but Leighton was out of London at the time, and it was not until "Romola" was about to appear, that George Smith secured him to illustrate the book, wherein his knowledge of Italy was a great aid.

The difficulties encountered by a novice in the art of wood engraving, are amusingly exemplified by a story in the Reminiscences.

"Leighton had never drawn upon wood before, and when the proofs of the first wood engraving were sent to him, he came to me in great agitation. The engraver, he declared, had entirely spoilt his drawing, leaving out certain essential lines, and putting other irrelevant ones of his own. If Leighton did not tear his own hair, or mine, it was only because his natural courtesy as a gentleman overcame his wrath as an artist. I sent for the wood-engraver—one of the best of his class—who swore by all his gods, he had engraved every line conscientiously. I found myself between two exasperated artists, and looked forward with some dismay to what might happen during the next twelve months. Lying awake one night, it suddenly occurred to me that I might manufacture evidence.

"I sent the next drawing to a photographer, and instructed him to photograph it with the utmost care. When Leighton next made his appearance to complain of the injustice done to his drawing, I produced my photograph, sent for the engraver, and the two fought it out together. Leighton became more accustomed to drawing on wood, and the other engravings gave him great satisfaction."

Du Maurier, on coming to London, was sent to George Smith with an introduction from Leighton, and immediately entered the front rank of *Cornhill* illustrators (1863-84). A later edition of "Esmond" was illustrated by him, and he made drawings

also for some of the Ballads in the First Collected Edition of Thackeray and for the Edition de Luxe. When his sight failed, it was George Smith who put him in the way of continuing to draw, suggesting—as he had already suggested to Frederick Burton under similar conditions—that he should draw on a large sheet, and have the drawing photographed down to scale on the wood-block.

Relieved of the strain of fine work, the sight of his sole remaining eye began to improve; moreover, by this method the original drawings were preserved, and the sale of them largely increased his income.

It was a curious mischance that, when he took to writing, “*Trilby*” did not come to his old friend to be published. As George Smith wrote:—

“He came to me with a comic air of penitence, and said he had come to make a confession. ‘This very morning,’ he said, ‘I looked forward to bringing my MS. to you, and asking you to read it. Last night, however, I sat beside Mr. —, at dinner; I happened to mention my book to him, and he at once made me a proposal which I accepted—how and why I don’t know. Perhaps the wine was too good.’ I laughed and said I should have liked to publish his book, but I did not see that I had any special claim to the first reading of it.”

Of Frederick Walker, the youthful genius who died in 1875 at the age of 35, George Smith set down several reminiscences, which are too good to be curtailed:—

“My first acquaintance with Frederick Walker was in 1860. I was at that time under a great and constant strain of work, and my room at *Cornhill* was rather jealously guarded against interruptions. On leaving my room on one occasion I caught a glimpse of a youthful-looking figure, portfolio under arm, passing through the outer office. The artistic profile—keen, clear, refined—somehow prepossessed me, and I asked the nearest clerk who he was. I was told in reply he was a young artist named Walker, who wished to make drawings for the *Cornhill*, and had called more than once with specimens of work he wished

to show me. 'He is a mere boy,' added the clerk, 'and I told him you were engaged, as I did not think you would care to see him.' The young fellow's face, however, had, somehow, impressed me, and I left instructions that when he called again he was to be shown to my room. This was Frederick Walker.

"He came and showed me his drawings, and I realised their artistic thoroughness and promise. It happened just then that Thackeray was beginning to find it troublesome to draw on wood. His last two or three drawings for the 'Adventures of Philip' were made on paper, and these had to be re-drawn on wood by an artist, and the result, so far, had not been very satisfactory. It occurred to me that my youthful visitor was precisely the man to re-draw on wood Thackeray's sketches, and I proposed the task to him, and understood that the idea was acceptable. But Walker's nervous agitation while I was speaking to him was almost painful, and, though I did my best to set him at his ease, he left my room without my being sure that he understood the arrangement I wished to make with him. The plan was to be subject to Thackeray's approval, and I explained to him how painfully nervous his new assistant was. 'Can't you bring him here,' said Thackeray, 'and we can soon prove whether he can draw.' I wrote to Walker and said I would call and drive him to Thackeray's house on a given day.

"The drive was almost a silent one, Walker's agitation being very obvious. When we reached our destination Thackeray set himself in a most genial fashion, but with very partial success, to put Walker at his ease. At last he said, 'Can you draw? Mr. Smith says you can.' 'Y-y-es; I think so,' said—in a hesitating fashion—the artist, who, within a few years, was to excite the admiration of the world by the excellence of his drawings! 'I am going to shave,' said Thackeray; 'would you mind drawing my back?' Thackeray went to his toilet glass and commenced shaving, while poor Walker took a sheet of paper and began sketching his subject's broad back. The sketch is a proof at once of his artistic skill and of his nervous state of mind.

"I looked out of the window while Walker worked, in order that he might not feel he was being watched. Thackeray's idea of giving his back to Walker as a subject, was as ingenious as it was kind; for I believe, if Walker had been asked to draw Thackeray's face, instead of his back, he would hardly have been able to hold his pencil.

“Walker made two or three drawings from Thackeray’s designs, and the work, it is needless to say, was done well. Then he came to me one day in some excitement, and said, without a word of preface, ‘I am not going to do any more of this work!’ I naturally inquired what was the matter; was he dissatisfied with the payment he received? No, he replied, he was quite satisfied with the payment, but the work offended his artistic self-respect. It was not original work, and his friends, he said, told him he could do original work, and he ought to do it, and not copy other people’s designs; ‘a task,’ he added, ‘which any fool could do who could draw!’ I said I would talk the matter out with Thackeray, and asked if he would be willing to make the original illustrations for the story himself, and would listen to verbal suggestions made by Thackeray, either directly, or through me, as to the subjects to be illustrated, and their treatment. This I explained to my sensitive interlocutor, would not detract from the originality and independence of his work. Walker consented, and Thackeray, who had conceived a high opinion of Walker’s ability as an artist, was glad to accept the arrangement, which saved him very much trouble.

“The first original drawing by Walker was an illustration to ‘Philip,’ called ‘Nurse and Doctor,’ printed in the *Cornhill* for May 1861.

“After this date, all other illustrations for ‘Philip’ were by Walker. He did much work of very splendid quality for the *Cornhill*.

“I can recall only one instance in which Walker’s work failed to give immediate and complete satisfaction. He had expressed a wish to illustrate ‘Jane Eyre,’ a book which he had read for the first time while staying with us in the country. I replied that it would be a difficult book to illustrate, and I doubted whether even the famous ‘F. W.’ would quite satisfy my expectations. Ultimately I proposed that he should accept a commission for a water-colour drawing of any subject he might select from ‘Jane Eyre’; and, after the drawing was finished, we would discuss the whole scheme. Walker chose for his subject the scene between Jane Eyre and Rochester in the garden, and produced a very beautiful and finished water-colour drawing of it. I admired the work; but it seemed to me that Walker’s Rochester was not Charlotte Brontë’s Rochester; nor was the Jane Eyre of the artist quite the Jane Eyre of the novelist. I did

not, however, give expression to my doubts; but Walker, I imagine, felt, with his quick artistic instinct, that I was not quite satisfied, and the subject was never again mentioned between us.

"We saw much of Walker, and greatly liked him; but he was always sensitive and excitable in a quite curious degree. He came to my office in Pall Mall one morning when I happened to be engaged with a lady. I told the clerk to beg him to take a seat, and to give him a newspaper, and I would see him in a few minutes. When the lady had gone I told my clerk to show in Mr. Walker; but it was found that he had left. Two hours afterwards he came back and said, 'I brought you that drawing of "Philip in Church"; you said you liked it, and I thought you might wish to have it. But as you would not see me I have sold it to Dalziel!' The artistic temperament, my experience as a publisher has taught me, needs very dainty handling!

"On one occasion while Frederick Walker was illustrating Thackeray's work, I wanted an illustration for one of the chapters and wrote to Walker asking him in the usual way for the sketch. I got no answer. I wrote a second time, still without reply, and, as time was short and the magazine had to go to press, I then asked du Maurier to supply the necessary illustration. This circumstance so aggrieved Frederick Walker, that it was a long time before our friendly relations were restored.

"Walker presented me with a beautiful little drawing, an original illustration to Denis Duval, entitled 'Denis's Valet.' Sir Frederick Leighton, looking at that sketch at one of our Hampstead parties, said, 'I would give five years of my life if I could draw that foot!' That sentence was a characteristic example of Leighton's generous admiration for the work of a brother artist."

Landseer was a frequent guest of Thackeray's at the time when the editor and publisher of the *Cornhill* were on the alert to enlist every form of talent in the service of the magazine. They felt it would be a kind of distinction for the first number of the *Cornhill* if the mere initial letter were drawn by so great an artist. Landseer good-humouredly fell in with the suggestion, but there was some delay before he sent in his drawing of the "black

sheep ” butting at the gentle lambs. It was February 20 before he wrote the letter reproduced with its two pen and ink sketches in the “*Biographical Edition*” of Thackeray, Vol. XI, p. xxiv, asking whether he is to depict an old ram, which looks wicked sometimes, or a sheep that usually looks innocent, and the initial only appeared with the fourth number of “*Lovel the Widower*” in April.

Now, this was not a regular business transaction. George Smith tells how, after the number had appeared, he was walking along the Strand with Thackeray and remarked, “I haven’t sent Landseer a cheque for that initial letter yet. I don’t know, indeed, if he would quite like it, for he did it as a friendly service.” “No,” said Thackeray, “let’s give him a cup.” So they turned into a silversmith’s, and bought what they knew would delight Landseer, an antique silver cup.

Frederick Burton—afterwards Sir Frederick, and Director of the National Gallery—was also a frequent illustrator of the *Cornhill*. Like du Maurier, he had lost the sight of one eye, and worse, the use of his right hand. Nevertheless, his draughtsmanship was very fine.

Charles Keene, I find, contributed a drawing in July 1864. Richard—always known as “Dicky”—Doyle contributed the illustrations to his own “*Bird’s-eye Views of Society*.” G. A. Sala, F. Sandys, Sir Noel Paton, and Pinwell contributed one or two drawings each.

By far the most regular illustrator in the *Cornhill* was George du Maurier. His first contribution was a drawing for “*The Cilician Pirates*,” and another for “*Sibyl’s Disappointment*” in 1863. Other single illustrations were “*The Night before the Morrow*” and “*Joan of Arc*.” He illustrated Mrs. Gaskell’s “*Wives and Daughters*” and all Mrs. Oliphant’s stories, except two; “*My Neighbour Nelly*,” “*Lady Denzil*,” “*Mrs. Merridew’s Fortune*,” “*The Scientific Gentleman*,” “*A Rose in June*,” and “*Carita*” (“*The Stockbroker at Dinglewood*,”

1868, being illustrated by M. Ellen Edwards, and "Within the Precincts" by Frank Dicksee); Mrs. Macquoid's "The Courtyard of the Ours d'Or"; "Against Time," "The Adventures of Harry Richmond," "The Story of the Plebiscite" (one); "Pearl and Emerald," "Zelda's Fortune," "Three Feathers," "The Hand of Ethelberta," "For Percival," "Mademoiselle de Mersac" and "No New Thing," "Washington Square," "Love the Debt," and for Lady Ritchie "Miss Williamson's Diary" and one drawing for "Sola."

Of Lady Ritchie's other stories, Frederick Walker—who had taken over "Philip" from Chapter 11, and was to illustrate "Denis Duval" as well as Rosa Mulholland's "Mrs. Archie," illustrated six: "The Story of Elizabeth," "Out of the Wood," "The Village on the Cliff," "Little Red Riding Hood," "Jack the Giant Killer," and "From an Island," besides one drawing for "Sola"; while G. D. Leslie illustrated "Old Kensington"; Mrs. Allingham "Miss Angel" and "The Rev. Adam Cameron's Visit to London"; Frank Dicksee "Across the Peatfields," "Da Capo," and "Susanna."

Mrs. Allingham also illustrated "Far from the Madding Crowd," and F. Dicksee "Erema."

Five stories were illustrated by W. Small: "White Wings," "A Grape from a Thorn," "Damocles," "The Siege of London," and "By the Gate of the Sea"; three by Frederick Lawson: "Stone Edge," "Avonhoe," and "Lettice Lisle"; Millais, as has been noted, illustrated "Framley Parsonage" and "The Small House at Allington"; Leighton, "Romola" and "A Week in a French Country House"; Luke Fildes, "Lord Kilgobbin" and "The Willows"; Hubert Herkomer, "The Story of the Plebiscite" and "The Last Master of an Old Manor House"; Marcus Stone, "Young Brown"; Arthur Hopkins, "Hospital Outlines," by W. E. Henley, and "The Atonement of Leam Dundas"; Miss Ellen Edwards—besides Mrs. Oliphant's story above mentioned—"The

Claverings,” “The Bramleighs of Bishop’s Folly,” and “That Boy of Norcott’s”; G. H. Thomas, “*Armada*”; Robert Barnes, “*Margaret Denzil*,” except the first drawing, and “Put yourself in his Place.”

Most of the illustrations, if not all, were beautifully engraved by Joseph Swain. But with the coming of the half-tone process and cheaper colour printing, the illustrated magazine of to-day is very different from the magazine which had to rely upon the woodcut. The speed and ease of reproduction make for an abundance and variety unknown to the old magazines. But woodcut had its own charm, its own artistic individuality, and the early *Cornhills*, still sought after by lovers of draughtsmanship, won an additional fame from the drawings, few in number, but from the hand of a master, that appeared in their pages, usually a couple each month.

In 1863, a selection of these drawings, by Millais, Leighton, and Walker were republished in the *Cornhill Gallery*, a large volume, and subsequently the work of each artist was published as a separate part.

But wood engraving was driven out by the competition of the new processes; to remain an illustrated magazine the *Cornhill* would have had to change its especial character, and after June 1886 illustrations ceased to appear.

CHAPTER XVI

CONCERNING SIR ARTHUR HELPS, WILKIE COLLINS, CHARLES READE,
ROBERT BROWNING, AND LADY RITCHIE

SIR ARTHUR HELPS—for whom Smith, Elder subsequently took over the series of “Friends in Council,” and published his later essays, paying £1,000 for the copyrights—was another literary friend of George Smith’s, and was instrumental in bringing him one of his chief successes. His own books had a large sale, for “they were the kind of book which a seriously-minded young man makes a point of reading, and they commanded a somewhat wide constituency.” Becoming Clerk to the Privy Council in 1860, his wise counsel was greatly appreciated by Queen Victoria, and as George Smith puts it, he “might almost be described as Her Majesty’s literary adviser.” When the Queen wished to bring out her “Leaves from the Journal of our Life in the Highlands,” Helps proposed the name of Smith, Elder as publishers.

George Smith proceeds :—

“If it was an honour to publish Her Majesty’s book, the distinction was not lightly earned. The office, indeed, involved an extraordinary amount of care and labour. Nearly every morning, when I arrived at my office, I found a letter marked ‘private and confidential,’ in Mr. Arthur Helps’ fine large handwriting. The letter almost invariably ran, ‘Can you come and see me for a few minutes : important.’ I had, of course, to go to the Privy Council Office, and hold an anxious and lengthy discussion with Mr. Helps on some question—often of grammar or of literary form, in connection with Her Majesty’s book. Ought a particular verb, for example, to be in the present or past tense ? Mr. Helps’ loyal anxiety on behalf of the Queen’s book dulled his sense of humour ; it made him anxious to the

point of distress about trifles which the Queen herself would have dismissed as indifferent.

“The book was printed, in the first instance, for private circulation only, and we took unusual precautions to prevent any of the proofs going astray, and falling into unauthorised hands. The compositors employed on the book worked under lock and key, and were kept apart from other workmen. Only the exact number of sheets necessary for pulling proofs were sent into the room, and they were carefully checked on coming out. I chose men for employment on the book in whom I believed I could repose perfect confidence, and my choice was amply justified. The proprietor of a New York newspaper, with characteristic enterprise and lack of scruple, offered one of the compositors £1,000 for a set of the proofs, and offered the amount in vain! The book was finally printed for the general public, and had, I need hardly say, an enormous sale. The circulation of the 2s. 6d. Illustrated Edition exceeded 103,000 copies; of the sixpenny Edition, 13,000. The book yielded large sums to the Queen; but it is well known that Her Majesty devoted the whole of the profits to charitable purposes. Her Majesty presented me with a copy of the book, containing her signature; and Arthur Helps said to me, characteristically, ‘Nobody can *now* question your right to being described as an “esquire”; the designation has been accorded to you by the highest authority.’ I am afraid I did not derive as much pleasure from this particular reflection as Arthur Helps expected.”

The book, first published in December 1867 at 10s. 6d., was immensely successful, and the following year appeared both at the popular price of 2s. 6d. in March, and as a handsome illustrated volume in December, at two guineas. A sixpenny edition was also brought out in December 1882.

More than forty years later, a curious sequel occurred. A clerk in Smith, Elder’s employ, named Frederick Enoch, was George Smith’s secretary, and in that capacity was in constant communication with Mr. Helps while the Queen’s journal was being printed. While in this confidential position, he became possessed of the proofs of both the private and the published editions, including some corrected in the Queen’s hand, as well

as some of the Queen's sketches and letters dealing with the book. These he bound up in four volumes. Whether these were given him by Sir Arthur Helps, it is impossible to say.

Moreover, in addition to the copy of the fine illustrated edition of 1868 which was his, he was granted a far more valuable possession in copies of the two private editions inscribed by the Queen, as a return for his special services.

Shortly after the book came out, Enoch resigned his secretaryship, and became publisher of the *Pall Mall Gazette* in 1870. Afterwards, falling upon evil days and poverty, he retired to Ringmer in Sussex, where he was befriended by a blacksmith named Charles Painter, to whom, in 1905, he bequeathed these seven volumes, his sole possessions. Sir Arthur Helps, whom he regarded as the only obstacle to their sale, had died thirty years before.

Accordingly, in 1908, the legatee sent the volumes for sale to a firm of London auctioneers, who noticing the quasi-confidential nature of the papers, though indeed they contained nothing that must be forbidden publication, brought them to Waterloo Place for sale at a valuation. It seemed advisable that the firm should buy in the material, as it had emanated from the office, and Reginald Smith, conceiving that their proper destination should be the Royal Library at Windsor, was enabled to carry out his design through the good offices of Lord Esher, one of the editors of Queen Victoria's Letters.

Accordingly, on November 18, after the opening of the New Memorial Hall at Eton by King Edward, Reginald Smith proceeded to Windsor Castle, where he was received in private audience, and presented the seven volumes. Finally a succinct statement in his own hand, telling the history of the papers, was inserted in the principal volume.

To continue George Smith's Recollections :—

“As a consequence of having published the Queen's book, we afterwards published a ‘Life of Prince Albert,’ by General

Grey, the Queen's private secretary, which had a large sale. The book brought me an experience which, as far as I, at least, am concerned, was unprecedented. The sale of the book was extensive, and General Grey received several thousand pounds by way of profit. The Queen, later on, pressed for a cheap edition, which was accordingly published, but which did not prove a success. The publication was on General Grey's account, and left against him a balance of some hundreds of pounds. He died before the account was balanced; and, as I did not like to trouble Lady Grey while she was in grief, I allowed some months to elapse before any account was rendered. The account was, at last, sent in; whereupon Mr. Farquhar, the well-known banker, who represented General Grey's executors, called at Waterloo Place, and in my absence saw my managing clerk. He complained angrily of the delay in sending in the account; declared we had no legal claim, and must know it; said if the executors paid the money they must do it out of their own pockets, and concluded by expressing his private doubts as to whether we were men of business!

"I had a great respect for Mr. Farquhar, for this somewhat irrelevant reason, amongst others, that he was a cool and daring driver. I had seen him driving out from a sale-yard with a pair of horses which were about as mad as horses could be; but Mr. Farquhar sat smilingly on his seat, reins in hand, humouring first one horse then the other, in a fashion which appealed to all my sympathies. So good a horseman *must* be a sensible man; and on my way home that evening, I called upon him at the bank in St. James's Street.

"He commenced by discussing the legality of our claim. I said, 'You need not consider the matter from that point of view. I am not going to law with the widow of General Grey, or with his executors. If you think I have forfeited my claim to payment by not having sent in the account at the proper time, I am quite content to abide by your decision. But,' I went on, 'we have a stock of the books in our warehouse; and although they will fetch only a trifle, I suppose I am entitled to what they *do* fetch?' Farquhar looked at me for a moment. 'Wait a minute,' he said, and went—I might say almost say rushed—out of the room in which we were talking. His manner was so hasty, that, for a moment, I questioned whether or not he had gone for a horse-whip, and began to measure my chances in a

personal contest! but it turned out that my gentleness had disarmed him. He was prepared for a fight, but not for a surrender so complete.

"When he came back into the room, he dashed a cheque down on to the table before me, signed 'Herries Farquhar & Co.'; but with no sum filled in. 'Mr. Smith,' he said, 'you are a gentleman! Fill that up for whatever you like!' For a moment my sense of humour, or my impudence, tempted me to fill it up for £100,000 and take it to the counter to be cashed. But I was startled and touched by the idea of a banker committing, what I always supposed was, from a banker's point of view, the unpardonable sin, that of giving a blank cheque to anybody. I called him back and said, 'This will never do. Have you got the account?' It was produced, and I said, 'If you will give me a cheque for so much'—naming a sum less than the amount claimed—'I shall be quite content.' The result, after the stock was sold, was not much loss."

George Smith's introduction to Wilkie Collins came through Ruskin, who must have known Collins' father, the R.A. Ruskin one day brought George Smith the MS. of Collins' novel, "Antonina." But a novel with a classical subject was not tempting, and it was declined. However, when he was writing "The Woman in White," Smith, Elder wrote that they would like to make an offer for the book, which appeared serially in *All the Year Round*. In January 1860, Wilkie Collins received an offer from another firm, and wrote to give Smith, Elder their promised opportunity.

George Smith had not read the serial of what was probably the most popular novel issued during the century, and the sequel, as told in his own words, illustrates his remark that "My life was crowded with so many, and such diverse interests, that not seldom in publishing matters I had to decide things in what may be called a happy-go-lucky manner; and sometimes this cost me dearly."

"On receiving Wilkie Collins' letter (he writes) I asked three or four of my clerks if they had read the tale, but none of them

knew anything about it. Wilkie Collins had asked for an early decision ; I had to go out to dinner that night, and I dictated a hasty note, making him an offer of £500, and told my clerk to send the letter off.

"The lady sitting beside me at dinner that night was a bright and lively talker, and she somewhat startled me by asking, 'Have you read that wonderful book "The Woman in White"?' I said, 'No, have you?' 'Oh, yes!' she said, 'everybody is raving about it. We talk "Woman in White" from morning till night!' If I had heard that piece of gossip a couple of hours earlier, it would have multiplied my offer to Wilkie Collins five-fold.

"I went to town earlier than usual next morning, and asked directly I reached my office, 'Have you sent that letter to Mr. Wilkie Collins?' 'Yes,' was the reply ; 'you said you wanted it sent quickly and it was delivered by hand.' If my offer had been multiplied tenfold I should have made a large sum by the transaction ; but my hasty original offer cost me the pleasure and profit of publishing 'The Woman in White.'"

However, George Smith published all his later books, and took over Sampson Low's interest in the books already published by them. "Armada" was written for the *Cornhill*, appearing from October 1864 onwards. Wilkie Collins had indeed arranged to contribute to the first number, but though he had "honestly tried" to write Smith, Elder an article, he gave up the attempt because, owing to the pressure of other work, he found it impossible to do justice alike to Smith, Elder and to himself.

Subsequently, though Wilkie Collins' books were selling very fairly,

"their writer believed he might secure a much larger constituency of readers. The books, he was persuaded, would have an enormous sale if published at a very cheap price. Wilkie Collins, in a word, almost—though not quite—anticipated the modern sixpenny editions. He wished to publish his books not exactly at that low rate, but for a shilling or two shillings—I forget which. I did not share Wilkie Collins' views on the subject, and said I would not have any part in an enterprise which, I

believed, would land him in a disappointment. His books were, accordingly, transferred to Messrs. Chatto & Windus, and the experiment of cheap editions was tried. Whether the result quite satisfied Wilkie Collins himself I do not know, but it is possible that my judgment as to the policy of low-priced editions was wrong."

Of Charles Reade the Reminiscences record :—

"In my efforts to bring every writer of any merit into the service of the *Cornhill Magazine*, I naturally approached Charles Reade. Reade was a man of remarkable appearance ; but had you met him in the street, or in a drawing-room, and been invited to guess his vocation, you would have exhausted all possible human callings before venturing to suggest he was an author. He certainly carried none of the usual signs of a literary life. He was tall, rugged-looking, with a loud voice, rich in harsh notes, and with that stentorian promptitude of decision and of expression which might be expected rather from the captain of a 'liner' on the bridge than from a man of letters.

"Reade received me on my first visit with great and loud-voiced cordiality, and we soon completed an arrangement for his writing a novel for the *Cornhill*, for which I was to pay him a sum which worked out at £153 17s. for each of the 17 numbers, totalling £2,615 9s. It made its appearance in due course under the title of 'Put Yourself in His Place.' Reade showed me his method of work, which was very characteristic. Arranged on shelves in his room were lines of enormous books, the covers having an area of not less than 3 feet by 1 foot 6 inches. In these books Reade pasted, under the most elaborate classification, thousands of clippings from newspapers, magazines, etc., containing incidents and facts which might be of literary use to him. He had a vast and ingenious index to these gigantic commonplace books, and he showed me how the system worked. 'Let us take "Heroism,"' he said, and straightway his big hands were busy in the volumes, and he turned up one story after another of daring and self-sacrifice, all waiting to be melted down to literary use. I got on very well with Charles Reade, and he first gave me the name which since has been quoted—for and against me often—of 'the Prince of Publishers.' Reade had a passion for controversy, and made frequent appearances as

plaintiff or defendant in the law courts. He had been called to the Bar, and usually conducted his own case. There was a large public for his writings, and he commanded high rates of payment for his novels.

“Reade’s life was somewhat too Bohemian to permit him having a very wide social circle, and he never came as a guest to my house.

“After Charles Reade’s death, we published some books for his nephew, Winwood Reade, who had a touch, at least, of his more famous uncle’s genius. Winwood Reade had travelled much in Africa, and his appearance whenever I saw him, used to excite my almost alarmed sympathy. His complexion was as yellow as that of a guinea, and in physique he might be described as ‘a mere bag of bones.’ Winwood Reade held it to be the task of his life to ridicule, and scientifically refute, Du Chaillu’s account of the gorilla; and he considered that he had triumphantly accomplished that task.”

ROBERT BROWNING

It was at the house of Thomas Powell, where, as has been told in Chapter IV, George Smith met so many literary friends; that he became acquainted with Robert Browning, who was a fairly constant visitor, so that George Smith seldom dined there without meeting him. They soon formed a cordial friendship, Browning presenting his friend with copies of all his early books, ever after treasured for their friendly inscriptions.

Very soon after the business cyclone which nearly wrecked the firm, Browning—who had gone to Italy after his marriage in 1846—sent Henry Chorley—the critic of the *Athenæum*—with a message to George Smith, asking if he would undertake the publication of his books. Much as he would have liked to become his friend’s publisher, his business affairs were too involved to let him undertake new responsibilities, and he was constrained to say “No,” without giving the true reason. Twenty-one years passed before the desired chance was renewed.

In 1868 Browning called upon him in Pall Mall, bringing

"The Ring and the Book." As soon as he had read it, George Smith offered, and Browning immediately accepted, £400 for an edition, the largest sum, indeed, that he had received for any of his works. This offer was afterwards amended by the publisher to £1,250 for the right of publication for five years. A second edition followed in 1869, and the poet, so long neglected, now at nearly sixty years of age, became a star of the first magnitude.

The old acquaintance revived in a very close and warm friendship, as well as a business alliance. Browning transferred all his own and his wife's books to the care of Smith & Elder. One day, when their intimacy was long established, he satisfied an ancient curiosity by saying straight out to his friend: "I have often wondered why it was you would have nothing to say to me years ago. I wish you would tell me, if there is no reason why you should not." George Smith was glad to have this opportunity of giving the explanation, though he would not have chosen to volunteer it.

Browning was not only a man of letters, but a man of affairs, with the amplest knowledge of men and of business. George Smith only once found his business capacity at fault, and saved him from serious consequences. The MS. of "Red Cotton Nightcap Country" was full of libels. His publisher had to convince him that he could be sued, though the aggrieved person was of French nationality, and the MS. was revised. George Smith declared that it was this very shrewdness and business capacity in Browning that made his implicit confidence so gratifying. No question or doubt was ever raised by him in regard to any business proposal made by his publisher.

"He trusted me absolutely. I was deeply touched when his son related that, on his death-bed, his father told him that if he was ever in any difficulty he was to go to me and act exactly on my advice; and that all matters of business in regard to his works were to be left absolutely in my hands."

George Smith was the first person in England to receive news of Browning's death, December 12, 1889. The telegram reached him after midnight. Too much moved to be able to lie down and sleep, he resolved, as much for the relief of doing something as for any reason, to take the telegram to Mr. Buckle, editor of the *Times*, whom he knew. Thus the *Times* had a column with the exclusive news the next morning.

Furthermore he approached the Dean of Westminster about burial in the Abbey. "The question of whether Mrs. Browning's remains should be laid beside those of her husband was also considered, but regard for the feelings of the Florentines prevented the disturbance of the grave in the cemetery at Florence where the dust of Mrs. Browning sleeps."

While the poet's son journeyed to England, the burden of making arrangements for the funeral fell upon George Smith's shoulders. To interview officials, send out cards, allot places for those who were invited, and that in the midst of the Christmas holidays, meant heavy detailed work stretching over many hours. In the end he was assured by the authorities that no funeral had ever passed off in the Abbey with such an entire absence of confusion.

His own close friendship with the poet was signalled by his inclusion among the pall bearers.

Browning had himself revised his poems for the 16-volume edition of 1888-9, which contains everything except "*Asolando*"; and in 1896 the complete edition in two volumes was issued, edited by Mr. Birrell and Sir F. G. Kenyon, who supplied the notes for "*The Ring and the Book*."

Meanwhile, in 1891, Smith, Elder issued the life of the poet by Mrs. Sutherland Orr, the most complete and authoritative account, but marred by various inaccuracies which might have been avoided had she shown the proofs to Browning's sister and son, and paid less deference to the theories of the "infallible" Dr. Furnivall. A new edition, however, under

the accurate hand of Sir F. G. Kenyon, was brought out in 1908.

In after years, the poet's dying wish was amply fulfilled. His son, Robert Barrett Browning, not only entrusted his business affairs with the utmost confidence to George Smith and his successors, but formed an enduring friendship with Reginald Smith, who several times visited him in Italy. His interest in the Browning Centenary is told in a later chapter; the business history concludes after his death with Smith, Elder's purchase of the Browning copyrights at the request of the executors.

ANNE THACKERAY

Anne Thackeray was the close friend of two generations of the house of Smith, Elder. She was a child of eleven when George Smith began that friendship with Thackeray and his daughters which she was to continue as warmly and wholeheartedly with his family and his successor. Surviving the latter also by a couple of years, she remained the last link with the earlier days of Smith, Elder. She could recollect the young George Smith coming to Thackeray's house in 1851 with proposals for publishing "*Esmond*," and in 1859 for a serial novel to be the staple of the new magazine—and she has told, as recorded in Chapter VIII, of the fateful visits and her father's delight in the generous proposals made. Her literary connection with the firm began with the fourth number of the *Cornhill*; her last book, "*From Friend to Friend*," so named after her final contribution to the *Cornhill*, which was planned in part before Reginald Smith's death, and prepared for printing in the last months of her life, was issued under the imprint of John Murray in 1919—a span of 59 years. From the first volume of the *Cornhill* to the latest issued before her death, her sympathetic and imaginative work furnished one of the characteristic threads in the fabric of the magazine, and she herself was at all times intensely

concerned with the fortunes of the *Cornhill* and the contents of each number, ever ready, in her gracious age, to send Reginald Smith a delightful note to tell of her preferences—or even the opposite. Through her visits to a war hospital, it may be added, and her desire to help one of the patients, the *Cornhill* received those striking and terrible experiences of a wounded prisoner of war, which were printed under the title of “A Canadian at Ypres.”

Personal friendship went hand in hand with a special guardianship of her interests, and Reginald Smith, in his turn, took over the trust in which his own interest was made to weigh lightly as against that of his friend.

George Smith tells a quaint story of one of his earliest services for her, when, after Thackeray's death, the family finances were somewhat involved. Sir Henry Cole, who had their affairs in his charge, advised that everything should be sold.

“Anne Thackeray, however, had a sentimental wish to keep a particular Queen Anne tea kettle, as her father had been very fond of it. I told her she must do as Cole had advised, but privately determined to purchase that particular kettle at the sale for her. It happened that another friend of the family, Mr. Russell Sturgis, a partner in Baring Brothers, made up his mind to do the same thing. He commissioned a broker to buy the kettle without mentioning any limit of price. I went to the sale myself and we went on bidding against each other long after all other bidding had ceased. The kettle fell to me at last, and I do not think a kettle has ever been sold at such a price before or since.”

Thackeray's copyrights, too, were to be sold in the general realisation. George Smith was anxious to buy these, but very properly refused to negotiate with the daughters, suggesting instead that they should place the matter in the hands of two or three friends who would be capable of effectively protecting their interests. They chose Herman Merivale, Fitzjames Stephen and (Sir) Henry Cole, who received his offer and approved

of its liberality. Most of Thackeray's books had not been published by Smith, Elder ; a half interest in these belonged to Bradbury, Evans & Co. and Chapman & Hall. George Smith paid £5,000 to the daughters for the whole of their interest in the copyrights, and bought the remaining interests from the other owners for a smaller sum.

Thus, by the sale of the copyrights and the house at Palace Green, all financial anxieties were removed for Thackeray's daughters.

Anne Thackeray's earliest contribution to the *Cornhill*, "Little Scholars" (April 1860), is a first effort typical of her love for children and her life-long endeavour to help the suffering and oppressed. Of this George Smith tells in his Reminiscences :—

"Thackeray sent it to me with a letter containing the following passage : 'And in the meantime comes a little contribution called "Little Scholars," which I send you and which moistened my paternal spectacles. It is the article I talked of sending to *Blackwood*, but why should *Cornhill* lose such a sweet paper because it was my dear girl who wrote it ? Papas, however, are bad judges—you decide whether we shall have it or not.' "

Three more short articles appeared before September 1862, "Toilers and Spinsters," "A House in Westminster," and a translation of hers, "How I quitted Naples." Then appeared "The Story of Elizabeth," her first serial in the magazine, which at one stroke assured her, young as she was, of a place in the world of letters. Of this George Smith writes :—

"As I was going away from the house in Onslow Square one night, Annie, who had been watching for me, thrust a little parcel into my hand, whispered, 'Do you mind looking at that ?' and then vanished into the dining-room. I put the parcel into my pocket and opened it on reaching my home. It was 'The Story of Elizabeth.' . . . I sent Thackeray the proofs of the story, and when we met I asked him if he had read them. 'No,' he said, 'I *could* not. I read some of them and then broke down so thoroughly I could not face the rest. She is such a dear girl.' "

Of her thirty original contributions during the first seventeen years of the *Cornhill*, the serials "The Village on the Cliff," 1866-7, "Old Kensington," 1872-3, and "Miss Angel," 1875, were the most important and achieved no small success when republished in book form.

There is a curious charm in many of her titles: "Sola" and "Moretti's Campanula," "Two Ladies—Two Hours," "Arachne in Sloane Street," "Chirping Crickets." Some take their name from old fairy tales—"Jack the Giant Killer" and "Jack and the Beanstalk"—"Riquet à la Houppe" and "Bluebeard's Keys," a plan which foreshadows the series of essays that took its name from her father's creation, the "Fairy Blackstick." In addition to the discursive essays, too, personal and reminiscent sketches also appear, such as "The Life of Jane Austen" and "Sir Edwin Landseer."

For some time after her marriage there comes a gap in her contributions to the *Cornhill*; but later years brought many more, notably, the "Blackstick Papers" from 1900-1907, of which, when issued in book form, she writes (November 9, 1908):—

"I think I am like the youth who fell in love with his image in the stream. Is it possible that these pretty pretty creatures are my untidy notes and scraps! I am quite charmed and I do thank you so much. Yours enchantedly."

Her personal feelings towards her old and trusted friend, George Smith, and his wife, are witnessed by her dedication of "Chapters from Some Memories" in 1894:

"TO
GEORGE AND ELIZABETH MURRAY SMITH
THESE CHAPTERS
(And how many not written here)
ARE DEDICATED
IN AFFECTION AND FRIENDSHIP."

Her long-continued work from 1894 onwards upon the Biographical, and subsequently the Centenary Editions of her father's books is described in Ch. XXI; it brought her into very close relations with Reginald Smith, whose personal aid in every practical matter was unbounded.

The story has also been told elsewhere of her share in the Thackeray Centenary, and the garden party in the Temple Garden, that "Happy, beautiful, sunshiny afternoon," as she called it, which was a rare exception to her rule of attending no public functions.

Serenely bright to the last, unfailing in charm and sympathy, she passed away in March 1919 at the age of 81. A brief tribute to her memory by the editor appeared in the April *Cornhill*; a fuller appreciation from the pen of Mr. Howard Sturgis in October.

CHAPTER XVII

PUBLICATIONS, CHIEFLY OF THE MIDDLE PERIOD

THERE was something very genial about the way in which publishers of old dealt with the booksellers. New books, it may be remembered, are offered to the booksellers before publication on special or "subscription" terms, lower than the trade terms given after publication. When a book is "subscribed," the booksellers to a certain extent speculate on the popularity of the author and the reputation of the publisher. But there was another occasion when books, old as well as new, were offered to the trade at special prices, the Autumn Sale. Many of Smith & Elder's big fly-sheets are preserved, duly tabulated and priced, with the list of "books offered to the Booksellers of London and Westminster at the Albion Hotel, Aldersgate Street," on such a date. "Dinner on the table at two o'clock precisely." The rosiness of their postprandial humour was doubtless calculated to make the booksellers of London and Westminster respond satisfactorily to the sallies of the salesman; but in time the pleasant custom came to an end. One would not venture to suggest that worthy citizens of London and Westminster came to enjoy the feast without proceeding to buy; it is more than likely that with increasing numbers time was lost and business congested. At all events by 1864 the list is offered only to "a Select Number of the Booksellers" aforesaid. The list is distributed, the orders are due by a certain date, but there is no dinner, and no meeting at an hotel.

These lists contain some new books of the year, but are mainly made up of the general stock still in print. Books that are popular and still in good demand are marked at somewhat less

than the customary subscription rates ; in a few cases very large discounts indicate books now in small demand, which require some special inducement to be offered to the booksellers.

Mention may here be made of " Smith, Elder & Co.'s *Monthly Circular*." This, which gave a general fillip to bookbuyers, was a publication without any precise counterpart, so far as I know. Its sub-title is " A Review of Literature and Art, to which is added A Catalogue of Miscellaneous Articles." The pages devoted to the Catalogue anticipate the illustrated departmental lists of a multiple store. The miscellaneous articles run through the whole gamut of stationery, from pens and paper and pencil-cases to pocket-books and die embossers, before proceeding to illustrate everything that could be wanted for export to India—from kitchen ranges and dinner services to steam ploughs and statuary porcelain, from furniture and the domestic mangle to camp outfits and soda-water machines. Clients at a distance could order quite simply by quoting the number in the catalogue, as depicted. Booksellers from time to time found a list of second-hand books to be obtained from Smith, Elder's book-selling department. They and their clients, the book readers, were always presented with a classified list of new publications and notices of the reviews and magazines.

But the really interesting part of this Circular lay in its departure from the functions of a regular trade circular. One half of it turned to literature at large. Like a forerunner, in some aspects, of the *Bookman* or the *Times Literary Supplement*, this section offered a causerie on current topics, books, authors, art, and once, exceptionally indeed, on a blue-book, the Report of the Select Committee on Ordnance ; long reviews of the important publications, biography, travel, history, popular religion, science and novels, followed by briefer notices under the heading of " Peeps into New Books." In all this there was no pushing of Smith, Elder's own publications. The books selected for notice were not restricted to what they themselves

issued ; by whomsoever published, they were chosen solely for their literary importance, and indeed, the publisher's name is never given, nor is any secret prominence accorded to such of Smith, Elder's publications as happen to be noticed. At most the *Cornhill* frequently takes pride of place among the magazines. The notices, moreover, are neither effusive nor slashing. They strive to maintain a measured impartiality of judgment, with ample extracts where space allows to let the reader taste of the author's quality for himself. Favour is simply expressed ; disfavour more often hinted than outspoken, as when the tone of a book is left to be inferred from the reader's acquaintance with its predecessors ; and literary merit is distinguished from disapproval of the matter, as when it is said of the second part of " *Les Misérables* " : " Without reference to the merits of the story, the extravagance of its incidents, and the objectionable nature of much that is introduced, there is, in these chapters, an extraordinary display of descriptive ability."

Apart from frank condemnations of tales of intrigue which are too coarse to be described by a word implying some *finesse*, if not some sense of responsibility, the most unkind perhaps is that on Mrs. Longworth Yelverton, who after being pronounced by the House of Lords not to be the wife of Major Yelverton, in 1864 appeared as the " star " contributor to a new journal. " Her ' Tales of the Squares ' in this journal show a very poor ' Rose-Matilda ' talent for writing fiction."

There is no evidence available to show precisely when the *Circular* was first issued, or how long it continued. It was certainly in existence before 1860, when it was suspended for two years, and continued till at least 1864.

The *Circular*, starting afresh in May 1862, provides a lively picture of the stir and movement of the time. The age of the crinoline in dress was a period of intense activity of mind. The *Cornhill* was launched a bare two months after the " *Origin of Species* " and the same space before " *Essays and Reviews* " ;

"Unto this Last" appeared in its second volume. Carlyle, "living, we are told, a recluse life at Chelsea, where visitors are, for the present, not welcome," is finishing his "Frederick," and Stanhope his "Pitt"; Spedding's monumental "Life of Bacon" looms high above Samuel Smiles' "Lives of the Engineers"; the public is reading Selections from Ruskin; Garibaldi and the martyrs of Italian liberty make a nearer and more romantic stir than numerous accounts of the American Civil War from either side. In fiction Bulwer Lytton is hard at work on "A Strange Story" and Victor Hugo on "Les Misérables"; George Eliot is a risen star; the Kingsleys and Hamilton Aidé and Whyte Melville are rising; and of Anthony Trollope it is remarked that "his pen appears to have no equal in its productiveness unless it be that of Mrs. Henry Wood, the author of 'East Lynne.'"

The Great Exhibition of 1851 had proclaimed to the world the hope of universal peace; to be belied by the Crimea and the Mutiny, by Piedmont and China. Shorn of these millennial expectations, the new Exhibition of 1862 at least rallied the forces of science, art, and commerce to foster home development and foreign friendships. Pages of the *Circular* are filled with gay and amusing description of the holiday exuberance that attends the show and perturbs the ordinary activities of London. The great show brings the crowds; the lesser shows seize the opportunity, agricultural shows, dog-shows, Handel Festivals, picture shows, including one-man shows by John Leech and Rosa Bonheur, and single picture shows of Frith's "Railway Station," Holman Hunt's "Finding of the Saviour," and Sidney Cooper's "Grand Charge of the Household Brigade." And at a moment when even the first stretch of the Metropolitan Railway from Paddington to Farringdon Street is a few months from its opening, omnibuses and cabmen charge extortionate fares and defy the magistrates.

The reader asks why the *Circular* dealing with books, devotes so much space to this swirl of social occupations? The reason

is to call attention to the consequent neglect of books. "In spite of a cold and rainy June and July, no day of which would have been wholly incompatible with a lounge, book in hand, by the fireside, all the world is out of doors."

From the survey of literature during the couple of years while the *Circular* was suspended, one or two points may be noted. One is the advance of popular literature. It is delightful to learn that "Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton has shown the world that he is not above writing in a cheap weekly journal under the editorship of Mr. Charles Dickens, and Mr. Thackeray has proved that a high-toned monthly miscellany like the *Cornhill Magazine* may be produced at a price which at one time would have been thought ridiculous." "The *Circular*, moreover, gives perhaps the earliest public acknowledgment of the competition, destined to be dangerous to the *Cornhill*, that arose from its own success. "Many who doubted the soundness of Mr. Thackeray's plan have now been content to imitate it in various shapes; and we have at least a dozen new magazines of a literary, artistic, or financial character, all striving to reach their particular ideals of perfection."

Another point is Smith, Elder's second series of shilling reprints, five novels, the first series having contained ten. "All these novelettes," remarks the *Circular*, *i.e.* stories issued in one volume instead of three, "have already acquired the highest reputation in a more expensive form, and are now reproduced, complete in one volume, price one shilling each, with the view of securing that larger circulation which the authors so well deserve." Whether the habit of reading had not extended far enough, or the novels, successful in their first sphere, were not vivid enough to create a new circle for themselves, is uncertain; at all events the series was not strikingly successful.

The *Circular* gives clear inferences as to the position of poetry at the day. Mrs. Browning, it may be remembered, had died in 1861; Robert Browning was not to assume his rightful

place till 1868. "No great work," we are told, "has appeared to push the Poet Laureate from his throne, and he still reigns the lord of versifiers and the trumpeter of International Exhibitions." Next to Tennyson, at due interval, appears to stand Mrs. Norton, with "The Lady of La Garaye," which is reviewed at equal length with Rossetti's translations from Dante and his fore-runners, and at greater length than Meredith's "Modern Love," a few months later.

As for the long-drawn controversies in science and theology that sprang into being at the same time as the *Cornhill*, the *Circular* makes little reference to them. There is a cautious review of Fitzjames Stephen's Defence of Dr. Rowland Williams in the heresy hunt after "Essays and Reviews." Lyell's forthcoming "Antiquity of Man" is announced, and—spectacular side-issue of the Ape question and Du Chaillu's adventures—a young gorilla is announced also as on its way to Liverpool, where rumour fell flat, the animal proving to be only a chimpanzee. But of Darwin himself, who had published with Smith, Elder years before, so little is known that in announcing his new work on "the recondite subject" of the Fertilization of Orchids, the *Circular* remarks: "It is curious, by the way, that the poet who took for his subject the Loves of Flowers and Plants, and attracted a great school of admirers about eighty years since, as a romantic botanist, was also named Darwin. We are not aware that Mr. Darwin is in any way connected with the once popular Dr. Darwin, nor do we institute any comparison between minds so different; but the coincidence, if it be a coincidence, is odd."

Some characteristic books may be picked out from Smith, Elder's lists in successive years to show the firm's chief lines of publishing during this period.

The echoes of the Mutiny are still strongly perceptible in 1859, and the traditional Indian interest continues past the separation of the Indian and publishing businesses in 1869.

Smith, Elder had supplied some of the scientific plant for the building of the Ganges canal ; this completed, they brought out a large quarto volume, Sir Probyn Thomas Cautley's "Report on the Construction of the Ganges Canal, with an Atlas of Plans," in 1860. There are books on Indian generals and statesmen, on the country and tropical agriculture, on Farming in India and on the cultivation of the sugar-cane in particular ; there is a volume of guidance for the Englishwoman in India ; Sir W. W. Hunter's "Annals of Rural Bengal," and the anonymous "Chronicles of Dustypore" by Sir Henry Cunningham became classics in their pictures of Indian life. From Waterloo Place were also issued the Lives of Sir Henry Lawrence (Edwardes and Merivale), Lord Mayo (Hunter), Lord Lawrence (Bosworth Smith), and Outram, 1880 (Goldsmith).

The books of travel, abundant at the beginning of this period, though often of no great importance, tend to grow fewer ; but among these stand out Baring Gould's "Iceland," the first link in a long connection with the firm, Winwood Reade's "Savage Africa" in the early 'sixties, and Vambéry's "Central Asia" ten years later.

The liberal note in the firm's theological publications, which had encouraged Miss Frances Power Cobbe to approach Smith, Elder, continues steadily. The 1859 list displays Sermons by Robertson of Brighton ; * Susannah Winkworth's translation of Tauler's Life and Sermons, with a preface by Charles Kingsley ; "Religion in Common Life," the first of many books from the pen of William Ellis, a keen educational reformer, and follower of J. S. Mill, who has been noticed already as an old friend of George Smith ; and a Prize Essay, Rowntree's "Quakerism Past and Present," together with the essay that took second place in the competition, Hancock's "Peculium" on the decline of the Society of Friends.

* Smith, Elder published a brief memoir of Robertson in 1916, by Canon Hensley Henson (now Bishop of Durham).

These are followed at no great interval by F. D. Maurice's Sermons, and in the later 'seventies by Brookfield's Sermons, and the first of several works published for Canon Page Roberts, afterwards Dean of Salisbury. Here may perhaps be included Hinton's "Mystery of Pain," first published anonymously in 1866, in succession to his "Life in Nature" and "Man and his Dwelling-place."

Liberalism above all runs through the works of Matthew Arnold, who, first coming into touch with Smith, Elder through the *Cornhill* in 1860, found not only a publisher, but a life-long friend in George Smith.

In the 1859 list, too, the eye is caught by Mrs. Gaskell's "Life of Charlotte Brontë"; the "Life of Sir Robert Peel"; George Macdonald's "Phantastes"; "The Fool of Quality" with its introduction by Charles Kingsley; and, first link with the firm to which he was to be so closely attached later, "Stories and Sketches" by James Payn.

The list of children's books, in early days a feature of Smith, Elder's publications, imposing with "The Parent's Cabinet of Amusement and Instruction for Young Persons," is brightened by Ruskin's "King of the Golden River." The list grows longer till 1866; thereafter it ceases to be a speciality.

The age of keepsakes is over, but the elegant domesticities are represented by books on Flowers and Ferns, Flowers for Ornament, Keeping Birds, and the Lady's Guide to the Ordering of her Household.

From this time on, the cheap series of standard novels, reinforced by the Brontës, grows steadily longer. A whole series of Wilkie Collins is added in 1866; a new illustrated series at 1s., including George Meredith's "Farina," runs to 43 volumes, and the various editions of Thackeray's works begin to fill a large space in the list of 1866. Soon the various "cheap" editions of the individual novels, some at 6s., some at 7s., were dropped in favour of a uniform and standard edition of the complete works,

illustrated, brought out in monthly volumes from the end of 1867 to 1870, and from 1871 receiving the name of the Library Edition.

To recite the editions in tabular form, we have :

1867-70. The (Illustrated) Library Edition, 22 vols. @ 7s. 6d. (after 1886, 24 volumes).

1872-3. The Popular Edition, 12 vols. (from 1886, 13), @ 5s.

1877-79. The Cheaper Illustrated Edition, 24 vols. (from 1886, 26), @ 3s. 6d.

1879. Edition de Luxe, 24 vols. (from 1886, 26); 1,000 copies only (offered to the trade successively @ 21s., 26s. 3d., 27s. 6d., and 29s. 2d.).

1883-85. The new Standard Edition, 26 vols., adding 2 vols. of works hitherto uncollected, @ 10s. 6d. With its new type and fine paper, this edition stood second to the Edition de Luxe.

1886-7. The Pocket Edition, 27 vols. @ 1s. 6d. bound, 1s. paper.

1898-9. The Biographical Edition, with Introductions by Lady Ritchie, 13 vol. @ 6s.

1910-11. The Centenary Edition, 26 vols. @ 6s. net.

The author of "Molly Bawn," Mrs. Hungerford, whose identity was not officially revealed until 1898; "Holme Lee," Miss Harriet Parr, who wrote children's stories as well as novels; Mrs. Craik, the Dinah Mulock of "John Halifax" fame; Miss Georgiana M. Craik; Miss Frances M. Peard, a descendant of "Garibaldi's Englishman," of whom she wrote in the *Cornhill* for August 1903, and authoress of "The Rose Garden" and "Unawares," to name no more of a long list; and in due course, the author of "Mehalah," S. Baring Gould, figure largely in the lists.

This was the period, too, when Smith, Elder continued to bring out richly illustrated books; Ruskin was in constant demand; of the *Cornhill Gallery* mention has already been made in Chapter XV; the pencil of W. J. Linton and the pen of

Mrs. Lynn Linton collaborated in such books of English scenery as "The Lake Country"; a translation of Grimm's "Michael Angelo" was followed by translations of Lübke's profusely illustrated Histories of Art and of Sculpture, both two guinea books. Another wave of *editions de luxe* took place some fourteen or fifteen years later, including, besides Thackeray's works in 1878-9, "Romola" with Leighton's illustrations in 1880, and Fielding's works in 1882, the latter being the least successful of the three.

Of translations other than art books the 1864 list shows two; the one, D. G. Rossetti's "Early Italian Poets and the Vita Nuova"; the other Gervinus' "Study of Shakespeare," a work as important in criticism as Sir Sidney Lee's "Life of Shakespeare," thirty years later, is for Shakespearean biography.* Between 1864 and 1870 appeared Madame Venturi's translation of Mazzini in 6 volumes; and a little later Erckmann-Chatrian's novels, "The Story of the Plebiscite" being published in the *Cornhill* during 1872.

In the 1864 list figures a long popular favourite, Gronow's "Recollections and Anecdotes," and, of greater weight, the first mention of G. H. Lewes, whose "Aristotle" and "Life of Goethe" were long to be standard works outlasting the popularity of his "Studies in Animal Life" which had first appeared in the *Cornhill*.

Matthew Arnold, who had first been drawn to Smith, Elder through the *Cornhill*, published "On Translating Homer" and its sequel in 1861 and 1862. For ten years from 1867 his studies in criticism and religious thought appeared in steady succession, many of the essays being first printed in the *Cornhill*; but for the public the book of the 1867 list was not so much "Celtic

* In the Shakespearean field it may be noted that in 1881-2 Smith, Elder published Brandram's Selected Plays of Shakespeare abridged for the use of the young, and a second edition later of Bishop Wordsworth's "Shakespeare's Knowledge, Use of the Bible."

Literature " as the royal volume, " Leaves from the Journal of our Life in the Highlands," the story of which is told in Chapter XVI. Parallel with the latter was General Grey's " Early Years of the Prince Consort " (see also Chapter XVI), while in 1874-80 Smith, Elder published the five volumes of Sir Theodore Martin's " Life of the Prince Consort."

Then 1868 was a red-letter year as marking the beginning of the long connection with Robert Browning, the story of which is told in Chapter XVI.

During the ten years while Matthew Arnold's critical works were appearing, note may be made of Nathaniel Hawthorne's " American Notebooks " and " Our Old Home " (" The Marble Faun," or " Transformation " as it was called in the English edition, had appeared in 1860), and a bunch of narratives of the Franco-Prussian war; in poetry Sir Henry Taylor's " Philip van Artevelde " and Alfred Domett's " Flotsam and Jetsam "; in literary studies two out of Leslie Stephen's three series of " Hours in a Library," and his " History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century," John Addington Symonds' " Studies of Greek Poets " and " The Renaissance in Italy," and Sir Francis Doyle's " Lectures on Poetry," besides a translation from the German of von Reumont's " Lorenzo the Magnificent."

In this period also there was published a very valuable series of medical books, the development of which from small beginnings was due to the General Editor, Mr. Ernest Hart, at that time Editor of the *British Medical Journal*. In earlier days the firm had published Gardner's " Household Medicine and Sick Room Guide," which by 1864 was in its fifth edition and was kept up to date by regular re-editing, the thirteenth edition appearing in 1898. Now in 1872 at the sale of the stock of a firm of medical publishers, George Smith bought the publishing rights in Quain and Wilson's " Anatomical Plates," Ellis & Ford's " Illustrations of Dissections," a large folio, and Ellis' " Demonstrations in Anatomy," 1872. Noteworthy are Dr.

Winslow on "Lunacy," 1874, John Marshall's "Anatomy for Artists," 1879, and "A Rule of Proportion for the Human Figure," 1880, Esmarch's "First Aid to the Injured," 1882, translated by H.R.H. Princess Christian, Holmes' "Surgery," Bristowe's "Medicine," Playfair's "Midwifery," and Klein's "Atlas of Histology," besides Leftwich's "Index of Symptoms" (1888).

These formed the starting-point of the new medical library. Successive editions kept the most successful of these up to date.

In 1873 seventeen new medical books are added to the list; the average of new books for the ten years to 1881 is 8, and for the next ten years, 3.5. In 1891 the series contained 43 books. After this time, however, less attention was paid to the series, and its scope and value dwindled.

Mr. Ernest Hart also suggested two weekly medical papers, the *London Medical Record*, January 1873, and the *Sanitary Record*, July 1874, which after about four years became monthly instead of weekly issues, and finally were transferred to other hands. The *Medical Record* was especially valued for its copious reports of medical practice in other countries.

Let it be added that even this serious branch of publishing found its genial side. While it was being organised, George Smith, with his strong liking for the society of medical men, used to invite his medical authors to whist parties of a Saturday evening at his rooms in Waterloo Place.

Taking the next period from 1878 to George Smith's retirement, the most obvious feature is the extent and excellence of the list of novels. Nearly all the notable writers to be mentioned had come through the *Cornhill*, and in most cases their books, apart from the serials, continued to be published in Waterloo Place. Miss Emily Lawless, whose "Grania" made a striking success, was not of the *Cornhill* group, and Mrs. Humphry Ward only brought "Robert Elsmere" to Smith, Elder because

her former publishers fought shy of its length. But her choice was no doubt due to the long connection with her uncle, Matthew Arnold, which had begun through the *Cornhill*, and partly through her husband, who, as mentioned below, edited for Smith, Elder "The Reign of Queen Victoria" in 1887. Henceforward till the death of Reginald Smith and the dissolution of the firm, all her novels with two exceptions were published by Smith, Elder.

The list contains the names of R. D. Blackmore, Thomas Hardy, W. E. Norris, Baring Gould, F. Anstey, Morley Roberts, Conan Doyle, Henry Seton Merriman and Stanley Weyman, George Gissing, Mrs. M. L. Woods, and S. R. Crockett. To these may be added John Ormsby, again a *Cornhill* contributor, with his standard translation of "Don Quixote." In literary criticism we have the works of John Addington Symonds, collected in 14 vols. in 1884, and Birkbeck Hill.

Frederick Locker and Violet Fane appear among the poets, the greater lights being the Brownings, whose works were now collected in uniform editions, Robert Browning's in 16 vols. 1888, Mrs. Browning's next year in 6 vols.

Though Richard Jefferies' books, pioneer works in nature study and rural life first appeared through the channel of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, the *Cornhill* sponsored Frank Buckland's "Notes and Jottings from Animal Life," 1882, and "Woodland, Moor and Stream," by "A Son of the Marshes," edited by J. A. Owen, as well as a somewhat different branch of observation, Grant Allen's "On Falling in Love, with Other Essays on more Exact Branches of Science" (1889).

Nature in more sophisticated mood also gave rise to the very popular garden book, the first and most popular of which was Mrs. Earle's "Potpourri from a Surrey Garden" (which was reprinted 30 times and sold some 19,500 copies).

Mention may be made of two examples of a class of book which the firm did not generally find very successful, the

Birthday Book. One, in 1881, was an expensive volume edited by Princess Beatrice; this reached a second edition; the other was a "Matthew Arnold Birthday Book," compiled by his daughter. It may be noted here that Merriman had a rooted objection to the use of his works for such purposes. As it happened, his books are full of epigrammatic sayings which naturally lend themselves to the selector; a year hardly ever passed without three or four such applications being made—only to be refused.

One fairly successful educational series was issued in this period. This was the "Suggestive Lessons in Practical Life," 1887, which next year was adopted by the School Board. In 1892-3 followed the "Object Lesson Readers and School Readers" illustrated by W. J. Pope, to which were added in 1896 six "Victoria Readers."

Personal and biographical books are well represented by the Lives of Caroline Fox, of F. Buckland, of Henry Fawcett (by Leslie Stephen), and W. P. Clayden's "Early Life of Samuel Rogers" and "Rogers and his Contemporaries"; besides "Leaves from the Diary of Henry Greville," and the "Life of the Baroness Bunsen" by Augustus Hare, all of whose works were transferred to Smith, Elder in 1883 for a short period. In their list his "Walks in Rome" were paralleled by the Miss Horners' "Walks in Florence." The first Jubilee of 1887 gave occasion for the issue of a critical study of the period, "The Reign of Queen Victoria" under the editorship of T. Humphry Ward.

The biographical interest reached its highest expression, however, in the famous "Dictionary of National Biography." The story of its inception and completion will be told later in George Smith's own words.

CHAPTER XVIII

FROM CORNHILL TO WATERLOO PLACE

THE year 1869 was doubly marked by George Smith's breakdown in health and the move to Waterloo Place. Hard work was always his delight, and already in 1861 the extension of business had led to his taking an additional office in the West End at 45, Pall Mall, nearly opposite Marlborough House. But in 1865 the strain of running two great businesses at once, Smith, Elder's by day and the *Pall Mall Gazette* by night, exceeded even his powers of hard work. Of this time, when he was trying to run a morning edition of the *Pall Mall*, he writes :—

“ On Monday morning I went to my office in Pall Mall and worked till 5 o'clock in the evening. I then walked or drove home to Hampstead, dined there ; went at 9 o'clock to the *Pall Mall Gazette* office, and remained there till the paper had gone to press, which sometimes was not till six o'clock in the morning or even later. I then went to Pall Mall, where I had a bedroom fitted up ; took a cup of soup and went to bed. I slept for two or three hours ; rose, took my bath and breakfast. The clerks came in with letters and I dictated the replies, decided all business and so forth, working this way till 5 o'clock. Then the round began anew with dinner at Hampstead, the night at the Pall Mall office, and so *da capo*. On no occasion during those four months when the experiment of making the *Pall Mall Gazette* a morning paper was being tried, did that strain of work—say 20 hours out of 24—cease. . . . Sometimes, as I look back on that period, I am amazed at the amount and the varied character of the work I got through.”

Yet he felt no sense of fatigue, save that, oddly enough, his legs were always tired. The opportunity for a well-earned rest

came at the end of 1868, when by the effluxion of time, his partnership with Mr. King came to an end, and fresh arrangements had to be made. Mr. King was willing to take over the Indian and Export and other Departments, leaving George Smith to continue, in the old name of the firm, the Publishing business.

“As soon as the pressure of work was lifted off my life—like Charles Dickens’ famous cab-horse which having been taken out of the shafts, straightway collapsed—I immediately fell ill. My nervous collapse was complete and most distressing. For two years or more I may say I hardly had a night’s rest. My nerves were so thoroughly wrecked that I could not sit patiently through my meals, and had to get up and walk about in another room. I lost my power of sustained thought. My courage went. I was whipped with vain and shapeless fears.”

The treatment of these imaginative despairs and self-reproaches of a nervous breakdown has been carefully worked out by modern specialists. In this instance the cure was effected by a shrewd lawyer, an intimate friend of George Smith, who afterwards declared, “I saw what was the matter with you. You were dying of idleness! Your brain resembled a pair of revolving millstones with no corn to grind! It was chafing itself into ruin.” Through him George Smith entered into a partnership in a shipping business, under the style of Smith, Bilbrough & Co., the new and active interest in which acted as a mental and physical tonic.

George Smith celebrated his recovery in an entirely novel manner, giving a children’s party on January 12, 1871, for which he secured all the seats in the front row of the dress circle for the pantomime at Covent Garden.*

The move of Smith, Elder to 15, Waterloo Place followed the dissolution of the partnership with Mr. King. The separation made it necessary to find a new home for the publishing business. The choice of Waterloo Place was in fact the indulgence of a whim on the part of George Smith.

* The delightful story is told at length in the *Memoir*, pp. 47, 48.



No. 65 CORNHILL

From a photograph

"I was walking homewards one day," he writes, "from the Reform Club up Regent Street, when my eye happened to wander over the building known as 15, Waterloo Place. This, it seemed to me, would be a very pleasant and convenient place for my business. It was both central and quiet; and the square before it gave it space. It was then occupied as a private residence by one of the partners in Herries, Farquhar & Co.'s Bank. I employed a house agent to make enquiries, and he reported that there was no chance of getting the place; it was held on a long lease. 'Go and ask,' I said, 'what they will take for the lease.' He did ask, and I am ashamed to say what I paid for the gratification of the whim that seized me to plant my publishing business under the particular roof."

The "whim," however, had some justification in reason; for it would have been difficult to find in London a pleasanter or more convenient situation for business offices.

In 1869 these houses were only gradually being turned to business uses. Carrying out the same design with their stately lines of columns, their balconies and recessed fronts on either side of the wide place, they had been built to accommodate the personnel of the Prince Regent when he lived at Carlton House. Old engravings show the line of arcading that ran across the bottom of Waterloo Place to the Royal stables, which stood where Carlton House Terrace now stands.

The only inconvenience, and that sometimes an amusing one, was the fact that people constantly mistook the office for the tailor's shop next door.

As the leases fell in, Waterloo Place was gradually rebuilt, the eastern and northern sides before the western, where stood No. 15. The lease of No. 15 terminated in 1914, but Smith, Elder remained in their old premises until all should be ready for them to move to the new offices arranged for at the N.E. corner, with a second entrance in Charles Street. The move was further postponed by the war, and so it came to pass that the last years of the firm were still associated with No. 15.

CHAPTER XIX

THE "DICTIONARY OF NATIONAL BIOGRAPHY"

GEORGE SMITH'S career as a publisher culminated in the creation of the "Dictionary of National Biography." This was no mere commercial venture. It was not launched for profit. As Sir Sidney Lee writes :—

"By his personal efforts, by his commercial instinct, by his masculine strength of mind and will, by his quickness of perception and by his industry, he had before 1882 built up a great fortune. But at no point of his life had it been congenial to his nature to restrict his activities solely to the accumulation of wealth. Now, in 1882, he set his mind upon making a munificent contribution to the literature of his country in the character not so much of a publisher seeking profitable investment for capital as of an enlightened man of wealth who desired at the close of his days to manifest his wish to serve his fellow-countryman and to merit their gratitude."

The "Dictionary of National Biography" was a rich gift to English literature commemorating his long connection with books and the writers of books, and at the same time supplying an acknowledged literary need. Moreover, it was a gift not only of a large sum of money, but of eighteen years' thought and care bestowed upon a cherished venture.

A "Statistical Account" of the "D. N. B." was published in June 1900, as a preface to the sixty-third and last volume of the original issue of the Dictionary, and reprinted in the first volume of the 1908 edition in 22 volumes, which includes as its last volume the three supplementary volumes of 1901.

Leaving the Statistical Abstract to speak for itself and to supply the multitudinous facts and soaring figures, this history

will quote George Smith's own description of the Dictionary, as taken down from his conversation by Dr. Fitchett in 1899.

"Some time about 1882 I conceived the plan of producing an adequate Dictionary of National Biography. It was an admitted want in English literature, and many unsuccessful attempts had been made to supply it. A 'Biographia Britannica' existed in seven folio volumes; but it was clumsy in form, was more than a century old, and most of the useful information it contained was concealed in very badly printed notes. Dr. Johnson was invited to prepare a new and revised edition; but, having already survived one dictionary, he wisely refused to risk the experiment of another. His own great Dictionary was a sufficient experience to last a life-time! A second edition of this work was actually undertaken in 1793; but it only reached the letter 'F,' and left the rest of the alphabet unattempted. Its closing article is on Sir John Falstaff: the 'fat knight' of Shakespeare ended the enterprise! In 1814 the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge undertook a Dictionary of Universal Biography. It was to be completed in thirty-two volumes; Alexander Chalmers was the editor. It took seven volumes to complete the letter A, and then the scheme was abandoned. It represented an attempt to cover the records of the entire human race! My first vague idea was a Dictionary of Universal Biography; but from this wild attempt the knowledge and judgment of my friend Mr. Leslie Stephen saved me. Now I know what labour and research a dictionary of merely national biography represents, I shudder at the thought of what a dictionary of universal biography—covering all historic time, and the entire human family—would have involved. Mr. John Murray, the father of the present John Murray, who had made some successful experiments in dictionaries, conceived the plan of a dictionary of national biography and spent some hundreds of pounds in collecting materials for it; the 'materials' consisting almost purely of a list of names to be dealt with. But when he realised the sweep and scale of the undertaking, and its prospects from a purely business point of view, he promptly abandoned it. Later he generously made over to me part of the material he had collected.

"Why did I undertake a scheme discredited by so many

failures? For one thing these very failures tempted me. They challenged my pride. Then, too, I liked the idea of a private individual undertaking a work which was really national, and which outside England is only possible by virtue of the resources of the State. There are national biographies in continental literature, but they are never the result of private enterprise. The State undertakes them and pays for them. Or they are made possible by the aid of ancient and richly endowed libraries. It was something that a private Englishman should undertake a work which, elsewhere, needed the authority and resources of the nation for its accomplishment.

"I resolved that this should be my gift to English letters. I owed much to English literature. I had been for years engaged in the publication of books; and this seemed a fitting contribution on my part to English history. The idea floated in my brain for two or three days, and then hardened into definite purpose. I estimated the probable loss, before I entered upon the project, at £50,000, but it will be nearer £70,000.* But I saw how great would be the service of a 'Dictionary of National Biography,' adequately planned and carried out with unfaltering industry and unfailing accuracy. It would be an invaluable aid to historical literature. Every man who has done anything entitling him to recognition and remembrance ought to have some record, no matter how brief, of his work. The value of such a dictionary lies not so much in its account of the few great and rare men of the race, for enough ink is shed on them elsewhere, but in the fact that it saves the memories of an enormous number of useful and noble citizens from perishing. It is a great treasure-house of English lives.

"My first step was to consult my friend Mr. Leslie Stephen and ask him to accept the editorship. Mr. Stephen's qualifications as editor were manifold. He was a scholar, a student, a master of clear and exact English. I know no one, indeed, who writes better English. He was an old and trusted friend, and there existed such perfect confidence between us that no scrap of formal agreement was required to define the terms on which he accepted even a task so serious as the editorship of the 'Dictionary of National Biography'! Mr. Leslie Stephen naturally

* It was actually between £50,000 and £60,000 on an outlay of £100,000.

hesitated a little before committing himself to an undertaking which must absorb him completely, and stretch through years. But he had faith in me, and the conception of the work kindled him. He took almost, if not quite, as keen an interest in it as I did myself. This work on the Dictionary began in the autumn of 1882.

"The next step was to organise a staff. Mr. Sidney Lee became assistant editor in March 1883, several gentlemen were added as permanent members of the staff; rooms were fitted up next door to the office in Waterloo Place, and a library of reference was formed.

"The next business was to draw up a list of names to be dealt with, and the search was pushed far and wide. Names were collected from every source, from existing biographies and histories, from magazines and books of reference. Printed lists were sent to all sorts of authorities inviting additions. The *Athenæum* generously published our list of names, letter by letter, with a view of securing new ones. Then the lists thus secured had to be sifted and the final catalogue agreed upon. When complete the Dictionary will cover 29,000 biographies [actually 29,120], and I think I may venture to say that there are no serious omissions in the list.

"Next we had to enlist our contributors, and in this business no pains and no cost were spared. The best authorities in every subject were secured. They make up an army of 653 writers, and include the best known names in English literature. Then came the distribution of names amongst the contributors. A complete list of the proposed biographies under a given letter, for example, was sent to each of the chosen contributors, and they were allowed, within certain limits, to select their own subjects. A general literary plan for the Dictionary had, of course, to be laid down. It was settled that there should be no fine writing. Canon Ainger, at one of our dictionary dinners, told us that the words so often used on rather sombre occasions — 'No flowers, by request' — might be very well applied to the 'Dictionary of National Biography.' We wanted no fine writing. Accuracy was more than style. Nouns were of more value to us than adjectives! And the nouns must be packed into the smallest possible space. There must be the severest terseness. Next there must be the severest accuracy. No pains were spared to secure this end. One member of the editorial staff has for years

almost lived at the British Museum, his sole work being to verify dates, names, editions, and statements of fact. Each biography was not only written by the best living authority ; it was, wherever possible, sent in proof to any one who might be supposed to have special knowledge of the subject for suggestion and correction. No outsider can realise the care and industry employed to ensure absolute accuracy. Then, too, it was settled that in every case the references to the authority quoted, or relied upon, should be given ; so that the Dictionary offers the utmost facility to all future and further investigation.

“ Mr. Leslie Stephen wrote the article on Addison, a model of terseness and balance ; and a copy of this article was sent to each contributor as an example to be followed. One of the greatest difficulties we experienced was in determining the relative length of the various biographies. Our plan of employing specialists, whilst it ensured each article being written with the amplest knowledge, rather increased our difficulties at this point. A specialist is always tempted to over-estimate the importance of his own particular department. An enthusiastic angler, for example, writing on, say, Izaak Walton, would naturally think his subject was of greater importance, and deserved greater space, than say Shakespeare or Newton. Each expert, in a word, cherishes the conviction that his own subjects are the most important ones in the whole volume, and he spreads himself out accordingly. It needed the cool and balanced judgment of the editor to adjust the relative scale of the articles, and the process was not always either easy or pleasant. Sometimes, again, human nature—the human nature of affectionate surviving relatives—quarrelled with the scale of particular biographies.

“ Communications from solicitors were quite common and generally ran, ‘ This is to give you notice that unless the article about ——’s father is submitted for perusal before publication legal proceedings will be taken.’ We learned to treat legal missiles of this kind with entire equanimity. The correspondence which gathered round the Dictionary would be a very amusing chapter of literature.

“ Sometimes the trouble as to the scale of particular subjects led to humorous results. My friend Sir Theodore Martin, for example, wrote the article on the Prince Consort. It was submitted to the Queen and approved by her, and is an admirable sketch. But, when looked at editorially, while its quality was

admirable its length was excessive—that is, for our space. Mr. Leslie Stephen asked me, 'What are we to do? This article is much too long.' 'Well,' I said, 'it has been submitted to the Queen; we must make an exception in its case and print it as it stands.' This was done. When the volume appeared the *Times* had a very appreciative notice of it—the press, I may add, all round and always, has been most kind to us—but the *Times* went on to say that the great peril of the Dictionary lay in the undue length of some of its articles; and it specified Theodore Martin's article as the one which erred most by its inordinate scale. I had just read this notice when Sir Theodore Martin himself came into my room. He was a good friend but apt to be generous of advice. 'Smith,' he said, 'I have been looking at the articles in the new volume of the Dictionary. They are very good, but some of them are too long, much too long. You really must guard against this. Don't let them run to such excessive length.' I meekly replied, 'I agree with you, Sir Theodore;' and added, 'Have you seen the notice of the volume in the *Times*?' 'No,' he replied. 'It makes exactly your criticism as to the length of some of the articles,' I said. 'Then the *Times* is quite right,' replied Sir Theodore Martin energetically. I did not tell him that the *Times* had selected his own article as the one shocking example of excessive length, but left him to make his discovery for himself. He probably made it; but, curiously enough, did not discuss the subject with me again.

"The anxieties of the enterprise—in its earlier stages especially—were almost too much for the courage of my friend Mr. Leslie Stephen. He used to worry himself over defects, real or imagined. I consoled him by saying, 'If you suppose a book of this kind can be beyond criticism you are utterly mistaken. Perfection is a quite impossible ideal. We can only do the best we can, and must be content with this, even if it stops short of perfection.' But on the whole I think the work is marvellously well done. It is not perhaps perfectly balanced. In a list ranging from Anglo-Saxon times it is impossible to tell what was interesting in a man's career until the article is actually written. So the exact length of each article could not be specified beforehand. But for terseness, for care, for accuracy, I think the Dictionary, if not perfect, may yet challenge comparison with anything else in literature. Let any one try to abridge a given article, and he will find that the sentences are scarcely capable

of compression. He cannot strike out a word without displacing a fact. As to the care taken to secure accuracy, the amount expended in 'corrections' is a sufficient proof. That amount is tremendous, for some of the volumes exceeding the original cost of composition. It is one of the chief charges of the book, and is, I should judge, at least ten times as great as in an ordinary book. We had the same printers—Spottiswoode—throughout, and the same 'reader' has, I believe, read all the proofs of the Dictionary from the very first. He is the most vigilant and accomplished 'reader' I have ever known, and the Dictionary owes much to him. The value of good 'reading' in a book depending so much on the minutest accuracy can readily be imagined.

"It took two years' work before the first volume appeared in January 1885, and since then a volume has been published every three months with something like astronomical regularity. The final and 63rd volume appeared in June 1900. To secure such unfailing punctuality needed sleepless vigilance, perfect organisation, and, if I may use the word, a despotic will. The perpetual fight against time, and against the too leisurely habits of some of the contributors really imperilled Mr. Leslie Stephen's health. But not a volume has been so much as a single day late! When you consider the wide area of subjects, and the great multitude of contributors, that is, I think, a very remarkable feat. Mr. Leslie Stephen was the sole editor for twenty-one volumes; for the next five volumes—22 to 26—Mr. Sidney Lee was associated in the editorship with Mr. Stephen. At that point Mr. Stephen's health broke down; and, reluctant as he was to abandon a task in which he took both delight and pride, he had to give up the work. Mr. Sidney Lee has been sole editor for all the succeeding volumes. Mr. Sidney Lee's literary gifts need no praise of mine; he is a man of the greatest ability. In addition he has a fine loyalty to the interests of the Dictionary. We have had fifteen years of work together; matters have had to be settled every day by our joint judgment and our opinions have often diverged. But I don't think we have ever said an unkind word to one another. Perhaps that speaks more for the literary man than even for the man of business.

"I have had my own anxious moments, of course, in the history of the book. Sometimes—say about 4 o'clock in the morning—I would wake and perplex myself with fears that, from

a literary point of view, the work might fail. I was haunted by a dread of inaccuracies. But, on the whole, the work has been very well done and I am very proud of it. I venture to say that no other book involving the same amount of labour and anxiety has ever been published. Nobody who has not been behind the scenes, and witnessed the difficulties we have had to meet, can appreciate the real quality of the work. We have taken infinite pains, we have never grudged toil or expense. We have, of course, met with much generous help. Every eminent name in English literature has been, more or less, at our service, and the authorities of the British Museum have helped us in every possible way. There has been notably too a very fine spirit amongst the contributors, a loyalty to the interests of the Dictionary, a zeal to maintain its standard, a generous willingness to take infinite pains in its service. I suppose the sense that they were taking part in a great enterprise acted as some sort of an inspiration. They knew, too, that the Dictionary was not undertaken for commercial ends, nor designed to fill its originator's pocket. They were serving literature when writing for it.

"We have kept to our original plan with surprising fidelity. At one stage of the work we raised the price of the volume from 12s. 6d. to 15s. From Volume XV, too, we added to each volume an index which is very serviceable; and, to make the index co-extensive with the Dictionary, when the series is complete an index for the first fourteen volumes—which at present have none—will be supplied. The supplementary volumes bringing the list of biographies to the end of the century will appear as soon as possible after December 31, 1900. These will be difficult volumes, as they will deal with more recent lives, and lives therefore saturated with controversial ingredients. Then I propose to publish an epitomised edition of the entire work, if possible, in one volume, or at least in two. This will probably have a great sale, as it will put the condensed essence of the Dictionary in a very portable form within everybody's reach. The epitomised edition is purely a matter of business; I have no sentiment about it. We have set ourselves, as a rule, against allowing the separate reproduction of any of the biographies. The Dictionary is a little unit, and is not to be taken in fragments.

"We have, after the characteristic English fashion, lightened the toil of our long task with a series of friendly dinners; dinners remarkable, I think, for the intellectual quality of the guests, and

not seldom for the very high standard of the speaking. Sometimes the contributors gave me a dinner, sometimes the contributors were my guests. It was impossible, of course, to gather them all at the same moment round one set of tables ; so I invited them in groups and had to take them alphabetically."

The progress and completion of the work brought George Smith many marks of recognition from those who were best able to appreciate its intrinsic value and the spirit of its creator, whether the literary public of the English-speaking world, or the contributors themselves, with whom his relations were ever of the most cordial.

The latter he entertained with his characteristic hospitality at his house in Park Lane in 1892. They in turn invited him to be their guest in 1894 at the Westminster Palace Hotel. Had a publisher ever before been entertained by a distinguished company of authors ? asked George Smith, as he returned thanks.

In 1895 the University of Oxford conferred upon him the honorary degree of M.A.

Then, again, on July 8, 1897, George Smith, to quote Sir Sidney Lee :

"acted as host to the whole body of writers and some distinguished strangers at the Hotel Metropole, and six days afterwards, on July 14, 1897, at a meeting of the second International Conference at the Council Chamber in the Guildhall, a congratulatory resolution was, on the motion of the late Dr. Justin Winsor, librarian of Harvard, unanimously voted to him 'for carrying forward so stupendous a work.' The vote was carried amid a scene of stirring enthusiasm. Smith said that during a busy life of more than fifty years no work had afforded him so much interest and satisfaction as that connected with the Dictionary.

"In May 1900, in view of the completion of the great undertaking, King Edward VII (then Prince of Wales) honoured with his presence a small dinner party given to congratulate Smith upon the auspicious event.

"Finally, on June 30, 1900, the Lord Mayor of London invited

him and the editors to a brilliant banquet at the Mansion House, which was attended by men of the highest distinction in literature and public life. Mr. John Morley in proposing the chief toast, remarked that it was impossible to say too much of the public spirit, the munificence, and the clear and persistent way in which Smith had carried out the great enterprise. He had not only inspired a great literary achievement but had done an act of good citizenship of no ordinary quality or magnitude."

To supplement this account, it may be added that in this same summer of 1900 all the contributors to the "D. N. B." were entertained by Mr. and Mrs. George Smith at 40, Park Lane.

It has often been asked why a gift to the world such as this, involving much more than a plain money gift, was not followed by some official mark of public honour such as is constantly bestowed upon the simple donor of a big cheque for some public object. An honour of this kind was, in fact, designed in 1900, but too late to be included in the birthday list of honours. Postponed to the following year, it was forestalled by George Smith's death.

The proposed additions mentioned in the quotation from George Smith's *Reminiscences* were duly carried out. The First Supplement, published in the autumn of 1901, brought up the list to the end of the nineteenth century, or rather, a few weeks longer, to the end of the reign of Queen Victoria, January 22, 1901, and, moreover, included some 200 names that had been accidentally omitted from the preceding volumes. The Index and Epitome, a convenient volume for summary reference, followed in the same year.

Then, in 1908-9, the Dictionary was reprinted on thin paper, so that it appeared in 21 volumes instead of 63, with a twenty-second volume to include the original three volumes of the First Supplement. This twenty-second volume contained a memoir of George M. Smith by Sir Sidney Lee and a portrait of him by G. F. Watts.

But the work was not designed to stop short at any given date. Mrs. Smith, to whom the property in the Dictionary was specially left by its founder, shared to the full his ideals of what it should be, and with the assistance of her son-in-law, Reginald Smith, saw to the continuity of the work, and brought out the Second Supplement in 1912, completing the list up to the end of King Edward's VII's reign. After her death in 1914, the Dictionary staff, guided by the editor, Sir Sidney Lee, continued their labours for the future under the supervision of Reginald Smith. After his death it was felt by the family that the work, which had never been designed for personal profit, would find its most fitting destination in the University which had officially recognised the greatness of George Smith's gift to literature. Accordingly the Dictionary was offered to the Clarendon Press and accepted on the honourable understanding, untrammelled by a detailed agreement the terms of which could not well have been drawn up in war time, that the work should duly continue. Thus the future of the Dictionary lies with the University of Oxford.

CHAPTER XX

TWO LATER FRIENDSHIPS: MRS. HUMPHRY WARD—DR. W. H. FITCHETT

As George Smith wrote in his *Reminiscences*, his publishing relations with Mrs. Humphry Ward came about in a somewhat striking way. He had frequently met her in society, and had been struck by her vivacity and power. She had already written a short novel, "Miss Bretherton," which, though showing the beginner's hand in plot and construction, contained excellent writing. After reading this, Matthew Arnold—who was not destined to see his niece's later successes—remarked to George Smith, with his constant delight in poking fun at himself, "She cannot write a novel. No Arnold could write one; otherwise I should have done it myself!"

To quote George Smith's own words: it was the autumn of 1886:

"One afternoon Mrs. Humphry Ward called on me in Waterloo Place, and said she had 'come on business.' I put on my business expression of countenance, and prepared to listen to her. She had written—or partly written—a novel, had asked Macmillans to publish it for her, and to pay her £200 for it. As her previous book—which they had published—had not been a success, Macmillans had declined her proposal.

"She was very friendly with Macmillans, she said, but had need for the £200, and she had come to me to ask if I would purchase her book on her terms.

"I said 'yes.' But she said in a tone of surprise, 'You have not even seen it yet.' 'No,' I said, 'but I read your previous tale. It is a poor tale, but it shows that you can write, and I am willing to take the risk.' She then said the book would be in two volumes, and she had written one already. Would I

let her have £100 on account? I remarked that it would save both her and me trouble to make it one transaction, and I wrote her the cheque for £200.

"The novel was 'Robert Elsmere.' When it was completed in 1887, and Mrs. Ward brought me the final 'copy,' I found it would make three volumes, and I told her that, on the proportion agreed upon, I must give her another £100, a pleasant surprise for her. The arrangement was for an edition of 1,000 copies."

Revision, condensation, rewriting of the still over-long MS. spelt delay; the last proofs were not returned for press till the end of January 1888. But the author was not discouraged, feeling that the book had gained greatly by the additional work upon it.

"Robert Elsmere," crystallising the latent liberal tendencies of the day within the artist's sphere of powerful character drawing, achieved instant success. It was already in its fourth edition when a hostile review by Mr. Gladstone stimulated its sale to an enormous degree. New editions of 1,000 copies each followed one another every fortnight.

In America—it was before the first International Copyright Act—the authorised edition was lost in the flood of reprints. Even the great stores in New York and elsewhere had cheap reprints of their own, which were given away to purchasers of goods to a certain value. All this brought the author much fame but little pelf. However, before her next novel, "David Grieve," was published, the Copyright Act with America had been passed. For the new book, which also had a great success in England, a considerable sum was expected from America. Of this George Smith has an amusing story to tell:

"She asked me to arrange for the sale of her American rights. I always enjoy bargaining for some one else, better than for myself, and I think, perhaps, I generally succeed better. Meeting Mr. F. Macmillan riding in the Park one morning, I said to him, 'If you don't mind thinking of business before breakfast, I think

I can offer you a good thing,' and proceeded to expound the merits and prospects of 'David Grieve.' We rode up and down the Row two or three times, and I left him with the understanding that if he brought an offer of £8,000 for the American copyright of 'David Grieve' before 1 o'clock, I would take the responsibility of accepting it on Mrs. Ward's behalf. He appeared with the offer within the appointed time, and I wrote an apologetic note to Mrs. Ward, for having taken the liberty of arranging for her book in America. At the same time I told her the terms. I need hardly say she was very much delighted; but I am afraid the book was not quite so successful in America as Mr. Macmillan expected. He used to say jestingly, that after that morning's experience, he 'really could not afford' to ride with me in the Park; 'it came too expensive!' Macmillans, however, made a great success with Mrs. Ward's next book, and this compensated them for any loss on 'David Grieve.'"

This book was "Marcella," which had a large sale on both sides of the Atlantic. It was followed by "Sir George Tressady." If one of the ambitions of a novelist is to receive a lump sum of £10,000 for a single book, before it has made its bow to the public, it is not indiscreet to confirm what has often been reported that this ambition was gratified in the case of "Sir George Tressady."

The first business letter to Mrs. Ward from Reginald Smith, as a new member of "the firm with which she had been so long and so happily connected," contained a substantial cheque for the *Cornhill* rights of "Bessie Costrell" (see Chap. XIV), a story written straight off under the vivid impression of a village tragedy which its earnings helped to relieve. Success in book form subsequently outrunning expectation, the firm made a further payment over and above the original terms.

After the death of "our beloved Mr. Smith," Mrs. Ward wrote that she would think not only of the past, but of the new friendships that spring out of the old. And indeed, as she had said to George Smith when making American arrangements for her, "Of course I will be guided by your advice. It is like your

constant kindness," so to his successor she could repeat time and again, "You are always the kind friend who makes literary life and work as easy to me as they can be made."

Thereafter, with two exceptions, Reginald Smith published all her books for her as long as he lived, and gave of his best in managing the complexities of her literary business in England and outside. Those exceptions were a sequel to the affair of the *Times* Book Club. Mr. Moberly Bell, an old friend, approached her with his version of his difficulties, adding, that but for the opposition of her publisher, he would have ordered 2,000 copies of "William Ashe." Mrs. Ward was willing to oblige him; but Reginald Smith stuck to his guns, and although he had good reason, as is told in another chapter, for misdoubting the solid worth of those "would-have-been" orders, he would not let even the shadow of possible loss rest upon Mrs. Ward, but insisted on paying over the royalties which would have been earned by the sale of 2,000 copies.

In order, however, to see whether the Book Club could do all that it professed in the way of increasing sales, a new book, "Daphne," was placed by Mrs. Ward with Messrs. Cassell, with a clause authorising dealing with the Book Club on its own terms. But the experiment came to nothing; by the time "Daphne" was published, the Book Club had given way, and come into line with the publishers.

In 1911, Mrs. Ward's works were collected in the "Westmorland" edition, with prefaces from her own pen.

Finally, in 1916, while the war hung darkly over us, Reginald Smith was inspirited by bringing out "England's Effort," Mrs. Ward's letters to our American kinsmen, written after an official visit to the front, and giving at last a measured statement of great achievement. For, as Mr. Page, the American Ambassador, remarked, modesty is a primary virtue, but Englishmen's reticence about their own great labours had almost become a vice.

Another notable friendship begun at this period was that with Dr. W. H. Fitchett, Wesleyan minister in Australia, and head of the Ladies' Methodist College at Hawthorn, Melbourne.

In 1896, there was brought to Reginald Smith by Mr. St. Loe Strachey a little sixpenny book containing vivid descriptions of battles fought under the English flag. Struck by the clear presentment and vigorous style, he telegraphed to the author, proposing to publish in England the entire series of these "Deeds that Won the Empire." The history of this little book is curious. Mr. E. S. Cunningham of the *Melbourne Argus* tells me how Sir Cyprian Bridge, when Admiral in Command on the Australian station, wrote to the late Mr. F. W. Haddon, for 30 years editor of the *Argus*, expressing his regret that young Australians had such slight knowledge of the struggles through which the Empire came into being. Could not the *Argus* publish, on the anniversary of a great battle such as Plassey, Trafalgar, or Waterloo, a description of the victorious fighting? The suggestion bore immediate fruit. Dr. Fitchett, who at that time wrote occasional leaders for the *Argus*, was commissioned to carry it out. His spirited articles were so popular that instead of waiting for anniversaries he wrote for each Saturday week after week, and these studies were republished in the book which came into Reginald Smith's hands. The admirable title was shaped by Dr. Fitchett from Mr. Cunningham's suggestion that something like "How the Empire was Won" should be substituted for "Historic Battles," under which the first of the articles appeared. The Editor of the *Cornhill* further suggested a series of battle episodes, subsequently called "Fights for the Flag," to appear in the *Cornhill*, each in the month in which the battle was fought, during 1897-8. When it came to choosing the episodes, editor and contributor, in letters that crossed, curiously enough presented almost identical lists.

This was the beginning of a long and friendly association. An editorial note appended to "Minden" in the *Cornhill* for August 1897, elicited the response: "It is an illustration of the courtesy and kindly treatment shown to Australian writers by their literary big brothers in England." Reginald Smith constantly proposed subjects, suggested authorities, trimmed a phrase; his friend declares that his most successful books are at least half the offspring of his publisher's aid and inspiration; he playfully exclaims, "I am tempted to think you ought to demand a portion of the author's royalty as having yourself done a considerable part of the author's work!" and more seriously, he tells the editor that he has a right to at least half the compliment that follows. During the Boer War an Australian M.P. said bluntly, "Do you know who is responsible for these contingents and for this outburst of patriotism? It is Mr. Fitchett and his 'Deeds that Won the Empire.'" And, on the other hand, criticism, however searching, he can accept and appreciate from a critic he absolutely trusts.

Before the New Year, 1898, Dr. Fitchett suggested another series of "Stories of the Great Mutiny"; this, however, did not appear until 1900, for he took up first Reginald Smith's simultaneous suggestion of England's duel with Napoleon, 1793-1815. He welcomed the theme as "a sort of patriotic epic," preferring it to a general study of Wellington, which had been in his mind a year before. The resultant four volumes, which he calls "in a sense Reginald Smith's own literary child," appeared in 1899, under the title "How England saved Europe," during his first visit to England, when, beyond the personal interest which had stirred him in the letters of a busy man, he found in constant intercourse and a hospitality that forestalled his every wish, the basis for cordial and lively friendship. On this visit, also, he came to know and admire George Smith, still the head of the firm, whose "kind, wise face" was to be an enduring memory. And from the lips of George Smith he took down a series of "Recollections,"

some chapters of which have appeared in the *Cornhill*,* while all constitute an invaluable fund to be drawn upon by the historian of the firm.

The friendship with the house of Smith, Elder thus begun, continued warm and enthusiastic to the last, and was knitted up anew with the personal intercourse of subsequent visits to England. In Reginald Smith, Dr. Fitchett found not only a friend but a business adviser and a literary critic, whose suggestions bore fruit, and to the sincerity of whose judgments he always bowed, even if they did not represent his own point of view. Such were the relations between author and publisher of other epics of war, such as "Nelson's Captains" and "Wellington's Men," or more peaceful studies, such as the "Life of Wesley" and "The New World of the South," or fiction such as "The Captain of the *Hirondelle*."

* "In the Early 'Forties," November 1900; "Charlotte Brontë," December 1900; "Our Birth and Parentage," January 1901; "Lawful Pleasures," February 1901.

CHAPTER XXI

SOME DEFINITIVE EDITIONS AND CENTENARIES

MENTION has been made of the new editions of Thackeray, Browning, Mrs. Gaskell, and Charlotte Brontë which fell in the transition period and Reginald Smith's regime, and in the case of the first two, marked centenaries. These were to be definitive editions; the novels were to be "placed" with a critical or, where no memoir existed, a biographical introduction.

Lady Ritchie was at work upon the Biographical edition of her father's works from the end of 1894 to the spring of 1899. The name Biographical was only decided upon after much debate, for Thackeray had wished that there should be no regular biography of himself; however, this seemed the best name to describe the essential feature of the edition, a preface to each volume describing the circumstances and conditions under which it had come to be written. There was a "rather overwhelming" mass of old note-books and letters and unpublished drawings to select from, and Lady Ritchie describes how she potters over her "ridiculous old diaries in which our charades and the new puppy play a much more important part than the real events which were happening and which we looked on as a matter of course."

A sidelight on her mode of work appears from a letter of March 1896. "I am sure that for me it is much better to leave all business alone till I have entirely planned and almost finished the whole thing, otherwise I get fussy and *conscious* and then I can't write a word."

When the offer did come, in 1897, it bettered all her expectations, and Reginald Smith told her that the firm had not proposed to regard their transactions with her in the dry light of

business. Indeed, they hardly expected a profit in this instance. And when the American offers came in, she wrote :—

“ I feel as if I was a most spoilt person, and as if everything I had hoped for about this had come about as I wished and even better—including your kind letter, dear Mr. Reginald.”

The Centenary Edition, twelve years later, contained more Thackeray material, which had subsequently come to light.

The Centenary celebration at the Temple has already been described in the *Cornhill* chapter.

The Haworth edition of the Brontës' works was first planned at the end of 1896, when Mr. George Smith asked Mrs. Humphry Ward to write introductions to each of the novels and the poems. Despite heavy pressure of other work, the subject was too interesting, too congenial to be passed by. The new edition was to appear during the autumn of 1899 and the spring of 1900, and the introductions were written during the former year. The attention received by the first of these prefaces was almost startling to the writer. They were not mere panegyric, that most futile of literary stuff ; for a critic to speak all his mind about the books he has loved from childhood is to render them a service, not disservice. But being unwilling to hurt any Brontë worshipper unnecessarily by a strong phrase of judgment here and there, she was at pains to retouch the wording of a couple of sentences in what was to follow.

There was one curious sequel to the “ Shirley ” Preface. Mrs. Ward, following Sir Wemyss Reid's monograph and Mr. Birrell's book, had repeated the well-known assertion that Mr. Nicholls was unwilling that Charlotte Brontë should continue to write after marriage, but wished her to confine herself to the work of a clergyman's wife. George Smith had already called her attention to the fact that Charlotte was at work on a new novel when she died. Then Mr. Nicholls, writing from his retired home in Ireland, gave the statement an emphatic denial,

whereupon Mrs. Ward made amends in a conciliatory letter, explaining how the pen would be betrayed into a certain freedom in dealing with the events of fifty years before, and begging for his authority to dispel this misconception. "It is like writing to a ghost," she told Reginald Smith, "asking Ann Hathaway whether the tales about her and Shakespeare were true."

After being steeped so thoroughly in the Brontë atmosphere Mrs. Ward was moved to write what Waterloo Place ventured to rank as a fine sonnet on "Charlotte and Emily Brontë," and this appropriately made its appearance in the *Cornhill* for March 1900.

After the Haworth edition had appeared, Mr. Nicholls consented to allow the Richmond portrait of Charlotte Brontë (see p. 62), which he had already willed to the nation, to be conveyed to London in order to be photographed. Reginald Smith visited him at Banagher, and bringing the picture back in person, deposited it with Mr. Cust, director of the National Portrait Gallery. Here, by permission of Mr. Nicholls, it was promptly cleaned lest further deterioration should occur, for it was badly spotted.

Mr. Nicholls, who had sold the remaining Brontë copyrights to Mr. C. K. Shorter, died in 1906. In the following spring, Mrs. Nicholls, remembering Reginald Smith's friendly relations with him, wrote asking for advice as to disposing of some Brontë relics, in regard to which she had been approached by several persons. Reginald Smith justly advised that the most advantageous method was that of public auction, not by private sale, and gladly undertook to examine them and put the matter through. Besides the work-boxes, desks, drawings, and so forth, there was a quantity of MSS. in the minute writing that was hard to decipher even with a magnifying glass. These MSS. comprised a number of poems, some of which had obviously been got ready for the printer by Mr. Nicholls; for the rest, the question of publishing anything put aside by the writer required cautious handling.

The question arose of publishing an authorised volume of Brontiana, in view of the danger that anything left unpublished,

if the MS. fell into other hands, might be printed, regardless of whether it would add to or detract from the Brontë reputation. It was resolved, however, that the sale should proceed. Nevertheless, among the MSS. was the draft of the preface to the second edition of "*Jane Eyre*," written in reply to her critics and revealing how their barbs had struck home. This George Smith with great perspicacity had dissuaded her from printing, for it would never have done at the time. For his own interest in this curious document and to prevent it from falling into the hands of those who would assuredly gratify their self-importance by publishing it to the detriment of Charlotte Brontë's fame, Reginald Smith purchased it himself at Messrs. Sotheby's valuation. At the moment, moreover, Mrs. Nicholls was greatly pained by the tone of a prolonged literary discussion of the relations of Charlotte Brontë with M. Héger, and all the more, therefore, appealed to Reginald Smith as a friend, to keep back from the sale anything that ought not to be published.

At the sale the 58 lots realised just over £700, Mrs. George M. Smith buying the letter from Southey, on the cover of which Charlotte Brontë had written "Southey's advice to be kept for ever. My twenty-first birthday, Roe Head, April 21, 1837," and the MS. volume of *Poems* by Emily Brontë.

The success of the sale, so far transcending the £400 expected by Mrs. Nicholls, was gratefully ascribed by her to the personal care and good management of Reginald Smith, to whom subsequently (in 1912) she gave as a memento one of Charlotte's drawings.

The MS. Brontë *Poems*, published in 1914, were edited by Mr. A. C. Benson, a task of much difficulty. Some ascribed to Charlotte were really Emily's, and had been published elsewhere; verses written for one piece were frequently used anew in a fresh poem, and some of the published volumes being badly indexed, the verifications were not easy.

In January 1914, being now 84, and desiring to settle the

destination of her remaining Brontë relics during her lifetime, Mrs. Nicholls sent Reginald Smith all the remaining Brontë papers and two unfinished portraits of his sisters by Branwell Brontë, accidentally rediscovered the previous autumn. These were in such bad condition that she hesitated whether to send them. In fact the canvases had been rolled up and put away in a wardrobe for many years, and the paint was badly cracked. It was a thrilling moment when these long-buried treasures were unrolled in the spacious room at Waterloo Place and revealed, one the heads of the three sisters, the other the breathless intensity of Emily's face, now treasured in the National Portrait Gallery, to which, on Reginald Smith's initiative, they were offered at Sotheby's valuation, for dearly as he would have liked to possess them, he felt they ought to go to the nation.

The papers included exercise books, an arithmetic book, and essays in French from the Brussels days; stories and poems by all four, brother and sisters; four of the little books in which they wrote as children. These were offered at Sotheby's sale of June 19, 1914. A curious pathos attached to the small piece of paper signed by Emily and Anne, and dated 1830, bearing the words: "Anne and I say I wonder what we shall be like, and what we shall be, and where we shall be if all goes on well in the year 1874—in which year I shall be in my 57th year." Both died young of consumption.

Again Reginald Smith managed all the business for Mrs. Nicholls, and once more, deeply appreciating what he had done for her, she begged him to accept three Brontë relics, happy in the thought that they would be in appreciative hands. These were an old watch of Mr. Brontë's, the brooch and eyeglass which Charlotte was wearing when Mr. George Smith had her portrait taken for her father, and the portraits of W. M. Thackeray and the Duke of Wellington, which, as told in Chapter VII, were given to Charlotte Brontë by George Smith.

Finally, after Mrs. Nicholls' death, a number of similar

papers and a signet ring of Mr. Nicholls came under the hammer on December 15, 1916, by order of the executrix. It may fitly be added that when Mrs. Nicholls died in 1915, it was Reginald Smith who contributed a notice of her to the *Times* of March 2, a notice which not only gave a sympathetic sketch of her personality, but was particularly just and true in describing her attitude to the Brontë family.

One last touch linking Reginald Smith with the Brontë memory. Among his most treasured possessions was one of the six or seven existing copies of the original "Poems by Currer, Acton and Ellis Bell," published by Aylott & Jones in 1846. It was Charlotte's own copy, containing her autograph, and had come to him from Mrs. Nicholls. This, together with a copy of the Smith, Elder edition which followed, he gave to the Red Cross sale on April 27, 1915. They fetched £70 and £5 respectively.

A friend who was present conjured up the vision of a little lady in bonnet and tippet, Charlotte Brontë herself, appearing at the sale and approving its purpose. The fancy took shape in the following verses :—

RECOGNITION

Braided hair so soft and brown,
Lace-veiled bonnet and silken gown,
Embroidered muslin collar and cuff
Under a tippet with ermine muff,
Quite by herself at the Red Cross Sale—
All by herself, nervous and pale,
Standing alone in centre of crowd,
No one knew her, for no one bowed.
I looked at her, and to me she seemed
To have come to life from a dream I dreamed
That years ago, in the days of yore
I had met and liked that lady before.
Gentle and shy as a country mouse,
I feared she was lost in this crowded house,
So pushed my way till I reached her side,
Then fell behind her, wishing to hide,
Wishing to guard, to guide her even
If she had lost her way from Heaven.

Watching her face as the auctioneer
 Rapidly worked the room to clear,
 Sideways I saw her eyes aglow,
 Saw her suddenly rise tiptoe,
 Watched the colour come to her face,
 Felt her eagerness through the grace
 Of movement that thrilled her from foot to head,
 And stooped for the words that I thought she said.

A book was passing from hand to hand,
 And standing high as a man can stand,
 I stretched myself the better to see
 And take my chance of its coming to me.
 It came—and I clasped it, holding it low,
 Letting her see before letting it go.
 We both looked down and noted its age,
 Its colour and print and its autograph page—
 My heart stood still—for the hand that writ
 The name of the author, was pointing to it ! . . .
 The book passed on, but my heart stood still ;
 Breathless we waited together until
 The figures ran up, and the book was sold,
 A little brown book worth its weight in gold.

In her lace-veiled bonnet and silken gown
 My ladye looked up and I looked down.
 And behind us another man keen and tall
 Stood propping himself against the wall,
 And the smile in his eyes was good to see
 When a friend spoke sympathetically :—
 “ How could you spare it ? And not grudge the loss
 Of a treasure like that—for the Red Cross ? ”
 He answered his friend, and we heard him say,
 “ I think ‘ she ’ would have been pleased to-day.”

Did he see the smile on the radiant face ?
 Did he feel on the edge of enchanted space ?
 Did he hear a word in that crowded place ?
 Did he know in that fleeting vision dim
 That Charlotte Brontë was thanking him ?

In 1902 the copyright in Mrs. Gaskell's works was drawing near its end. It was obviously desirable, especially in view of the inevitable reprints to come, that a definitive edition headed by an adequate memoir should be brought out. Such an edition would not only have a new book-life, but would do much to fix and consecrate her reputation, which was still considerably below her merits. The Miss Gaskells, however, were

very sensitive on the point. They had already refused in 1900 to write brief introductory notes for a new edition. Their mother was strongly averse from any personal memoir, and apparently there was something in the nature of a deathbed promise by which they regarded themselves as absolutely bound. On the other hand, there was Lady Ritchie's preface to the illustrated "*Cranford*," to which some, though very limited, facilities had been given. Mr. W. T. Arnold, a great student of Mrs. Gaskell's works, consulted by Reginald Smith, suggested that short of anything like a definite Memoir which, he thought, Leslie Stephen alone could adequately write, the family might consent to prefaces to each volume, stating the circumstances under which it was written, identifying localities, etc., with perhaps a general preface in the nature of a chronological sketch of her authorship. "I do most heartily agree with you," he wrote, "that Mrs. Gaskell at her best is a really great writer, and if you can succeed in your scheme of giving her the definitive edition which she needs and which is the only thing wanted to cause her genius to be universally recognised, you will render a very real service to English letters."

To Mr. Arnold was entrusted the revision of the text and the regrouping of the stories. For example, the text suffered from very long paragraphs which required breaking up. Some extended to a page and a half. The probable reason for this appears from an early letter of Mrs. Gaskell to George Smith. She explains that she writes steadily across her papers, dialogue and all, leaving it to the printer to break up. Among peculiarities of diction or slips occurred the "isle" of a church. Was this, as the Miss Gaskells thought, a printer's error, or was it a survival of the old spelling, the latest example of which in the *New English Dictionary* is dated 1836, twenty years earlier? As to the existing grouping of the stories, Mr. Aitchison, for many years manager to Smith, Elder, being appealed to, remembered that "when the collected edition came into being, the plates on which many of

the stories were printed were brought together from various publishers, and they were re-arranged more according to length than to any thought of chronology. So that 'Wives and Daughters,' which *was* last, is first."

To the scheme as outlined by Reginald Smith's persuasive pen, the Miss Gaskells gave a cordial consent, and promptly offered to lend any pictures, drawings, MSS., or original editions, among which they named "a rough sketch of the plot of 'Mary Barton,' drawn out before a word of the book was written, but strangely adhered to in the writing—a water-colour drawing of a picturesque little farm in the Green Hays Fields, the scene of its opening, etc."

"We would," Miss Gaskell added, "name the very few *places* which can be identified as having been described; but we want to make a dead set against the tendency to identify the *characters* in my Mother's books with so-called 'originals.' The way in which, in spite of our reiterated assurances, Knutsford claims to be the original of 'Cranford' and pretends to recognise the originals of all the characters in it, has annoyed us more than I can say. It seems to belittle her genius and imagination.

"This tradition has now so firmly established (itself) at Knutsford, that we have at length almost ceased trying to overcome it" (May 1902).

For the critical and biographical work it was impossible to secure either Leslie Stephen, or Canon Ainger, to whom merely abstract and impersonal criticism did not appeal, or Mr. John Morley, who was approached as he came to the end of his "Life of Gladstone."

Finally, Dr. (afterwards Sir) Adolphus Ward, of Peterhouse, despite misgivings about the pressure of other work, accepted the task at the end of 1903. His long-standing friendship with the Gaskell family and with his collaborator added a special sympathy to his scholarly qualifications.

On the death of Mr. Arnold, Dr. Ward took over his chronological list and his notes, so far as completed, on the separate

stories. For the edition he planned a duplex chronological arrangement ; the long stories in right sequence of date, and the short stories similarly, but interplaced among the former series according to the exigencies of space.

Plans once settled, the correspondence shows Reginald Smith constantly ready to lend help with his practical judgment in literary details, such, for instance, as the doubtful ascription to Mrs. Gaskell of " One of our Legal Fictions," which appeared anonymously in *Household Words*. And Dr. Ward at the end of his difficult task, found " all difficulties lightened by his confidence," and his " unfailing kindness and consideration."

As is generally the case with a special collected edition, the question of a name took long to decide. A baker's dozen of suggestions were considered, from the Biographical Edition to the North and South, from the Cranford,* which might perhaps clash with the Cranford Series, to—Miss Gaskell's preference—either the Ward or the Queen's, a title recalling the Queen's interest in " Mary Barton " and its social problems.

Finally came " a little Cinderella of an after-thought "—" there is also the Knutsford Edition." The shoe fitted at last ; Cinderella was the instant elect of editor and publisher.

To celebrate the conclusion of the work, Reginald Smith, as was his way, sent Dr. Ward for the New Year of 1907 a drawing of old Manchester, and a portrait of Mrs. Gaskell, while in the spring he had all Mrs. Gaskell's letters from Charlotte Brontë bound as a memorial gift to her daughters. And Miss Gaskell

* Of this suggestion Miss Gaskell wrote : " Though I much deplore it, I think that my Mother is best known as the author of ' Cranford.' People constantly speak to us about it as her greatest book—(such a *blind* mistake). She herself once said to me, ' If I live as a writer, it will be through " Cranford " '—and the numberless Americans, who, on seeing our name on our luggage abroad, come up and ask if we are ' any relation to the Mrs. Gaskell, who wrote " Cranford," ' is a proof of its immense popularity in the U.S.A." Mrs. Gaskell herself, if she did not rate " Cranford " highest, at least liked it best of her stories. See p. 81.

took opportunity to present her old friend, Mrs. George Smith, with a long-intended gift, to be added to the Smith, Elder archives—the plan of the Chapter Coffee House, drawn by Mr. Brontë for Charlotte's guidance on her first visit to London.

When the work was in hand, the Miss Gaskells were much troubled by more than one outside project to write a critical biography of their mother—"the wishes of the dead," they exclaim bitterly, "seem to count for nothing now"—and still more, to extract original material from them, or to examine unpublished letters in their keeping. Both sisters were impulsive and quick; Miss Meta confessed, "I have never yet mastered the art of 'thinking before speaking,' and though Julia is not so rash as I, yet I think that in a talk we might give our adhesion to more than we meant." Desiring, then, to deal with a difficult situation in writing, they appealed for advice to Reginald Smith; he sketched them a letter, which they gratefully adopted. "Without 'treason to my sex,' I think," wrote Miss Meta, "that I may truly say that *no* woman could have written so admirable a one, and only *some* K.C.'s!"

The Browning Centenary fell in 1912. To celebrate this, the Centenary Edition of Browning's works was brought out in 10 volumes, demy 8vo, including all the poems contained in the previous complete editions of 1888-9, and of 1896, with the addition of a few short poems of various dates not hitherto taken into the Collected Editions. The text followed was that of the last edition supervised by the Poet, namely, that of 1888-9, with the correction of a few oversights. The arrangement was as nearly chronological as possible.

Each volume had an introduction by Sir Frederic Kenyon, biographical and bibliographical, and each had a photogravure portrait as frontispiece, several of them being new. The edition was limited to 500 copies for England, and 250 for America, with

26 for either country specially printed on Japanese paper and numbered. These cost 10 guineas a set ; the former five.

The first volume was issued on the poet's birthday, May 7. On the same day, evensong at Westminster Abbey took the form of a commemorative service, the opening voluntary being the Adagio from the Sonata in D by Galuppi, the concluding voluntaries the Allegro Spirituoso by Galuppi and Fugue in G by Bach, and the anthems a setting by Sir Hubert Parry on ten lines from "Saul," Canto xviii., and "He giveth his beloved sleep," by Elizabeth Barrett Browning, set by Sir Frederick Bridge, and originally sung at the burial of Robert Browning in Westminster Abbey, December 31, 1889. Thereafter the invited guests adjourned to the College Hall, where, under the presidency of Lord Crewe, a number of addresses were given.

Asolo, too, had its *fiesta* to unveil a commemorative tablet on Browning's house, and to bestow a new name on the street, Via Roberto Browning, not without eloquent speeches and a procession, conspicuous in which were the girls of the lace school, that boon to the town, founded in memory of the poet by his son.

Robert Barrett Browning lived long enough to see this culminating point of a long association between two generations on either side. He inherited to the full that friendship and confidence which had existed between poet and publisher. While questions of copyright, new editions, commentators—judicious and injudicious—the poet's right to a coat of arms, provided endless matter for business, he found in Reginald Smith "an inexhaustible fount of kindness" over and above his helpful and liberal business management. Friendship was maintained by frequent correspondence and occasional visits.*

The Centenary of 1912 was not the only one connected with the name of Browning. The centenary of Mrs. Browning fell

* Reginald Smith went to see him at Florence in April 1903, and again on the Riviera in 1906 ; visited him at Asolo in May 1907, and at Florence in April 1911, and finally at Asolo in 1912.

in 1906. For this Reginald Smith brought out a book he had suggested to Mr. Percy Lubbock, "Elizabeth Barrett Browning in her Letters." At the same time, as he had already been concerned in placing a tablet to mark her old home in Wimpole Street, so he was active in organising a memorial to her in Westminster Abbey, for though, as has been told, the Dean had been ready to lay her body beside that of the poet if it could be removed from Florence, Poets' Corner contained not even the record of her name.

Lack of wall-space forbade a separate monument. The inscription added beneath that to her husband stands simply :

"ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING: 1806-1861."

Reginald Smith was also the intermediary for another memorial to Mrs. Browning, for through his friend Barrett Browning, he enabled Mr. Passmore Edwards, donor of the Ruskin Art Gallery to Camberwell, to procure a replica of W. W. Story's bust of Mrs. Browning and place it in the gallery beside those of her husband and Ruskin.

The final Browning publications were from a number of poems by both Mr. and Mrs. Browning, which came to light in a sale early in 1913. Leaving the juvenilia aside as mere curiosities, Reginald Smith printed eleven of these poems in the *Cornhill* between October 1913 and October 1914.

CHAPTER XXII

SIR A. CONAN DOYLE AND AN INCURSION INTO DIPLOMACY

AMONG the notable books published by Reginald Smith in his earlier period was the "History of the Great Boer War," by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, which appeared in the autumn of 1900. It had been written in South Africa while the author was serving in the Langman Hospital. Was ever history written under such conditions? "We are steeped in typhoid," he wrote, "130 cases in a 100-bed hospital—live, move, and have our being in it. Below this atmosphere of disease is a six-inch layer of mud—so you can think it is cheery. But we are doing good work." The book provoked intense interest and large correspondence, till the author exclaimed that his death-bed would find him still writing amendments to the book. Still, it was worth while to try and make this small monument as perfect as might be. He felt, however, that something more was needed; a statement of the British case in a form accessible to the masses, to counteract the current anti-British propaganda both at home and, when translated, abroad. Accordingly, he wrote to Reginald Smith on November 20, 1901, suggesting a sixpenny pamphlet to consist of the first three chapters of the book with certain modifications for the purpose in hand, and a preface, to be called "The Cause and Conduct of the War." The work was carried out at full speed. The draft was completed by December 17, the pamphlet printed and published by January 15. It was distributed by Messrs. George Newnes & Co., who generously offered their unrivalled facilities for distribution at cost price. Neither author nor publisher looked for any profit in a work which they regarded as a piece of public service,

and when the scheme was well afoot, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle issued an appeal for funds to print larger numbers and effect translations into as many languages as possible. The morning after his letter appeared in the *Times* he received 127 replies bringing subscriptions. Among the subscribers of the £2,000 received by the time the pamphlet was published, there were many foreigners resident in this country. Three hundred thousand copies were either distributed or sold here at the price of sixpence (issued to the booksellers at half price); fifty thousand in Canada and the United States. A small return over the actual cost of production formed a nucleus for the translation and foreign distribution fund, upon which alone Smith, Elder had expended £1,725 by Midsummer 1902. The translations, in Tamil and Kanarese, as well as almost every European language, totalled about 100,000 copies. These were mostly distributed; the returns from sales amounted only to about £70, apart from the £50 paid by Baron Tauchnitz, who refused to give less, though Smith, Elder protested that the sum was excessive.

The Dutch publishers refused to touch the pamphlet; a Dutch translation was printed in London and distributed by post in Holland. In Germany, after two refusals, one of them insulting, it was taken by the German *Times*. A picturesque touch came from Norway, where Thomassen of the *Verdensgang*, politically opposed to England, published the pamphlet in the interest of fair play. At the last moment it seemed as though the pamphlet must go to press without the special preface written for Scandinavia, for the translator, a hundred miles from Christiania, was entirely cut off by a great snowstorm. But the difficulty was overcome by heliographing the translation across country.

The effect of the undertaking was considerable. The tone of the hostile Continental press grew less acrimonious. Papers in Brussels and Berlin went so far as to quote the arguments of the pamphlet as a reason for a revision of judgment.

When the accounts of the venture were finally made up, a surplus remained. After grants had been made to various patriotic institutions, including £1,000 to provide an annual prize for the best South African student at Edinburgh University, and a souvenir, in the shape of a gold cigarette case, given to the six persons who had most helped the venture, there still remained £300. Reginald Smith suggested that this should be applied in providing a challenge cup to be shot for by the ships of the Channel Fleet. This was enthusiastically taken up by Sir A. C. Doyle, and, thanks to the good offices of Sir Percy Scott, then in command of the *Excellent*, the project came before the Admiralty with such all-round expressions of approval that it met with acceptance instead of the brief refusal which had been the fate of similar suggestions in the past.

Naval enthusiasm for the cup may be measured by the fact that in 1906 an officer in a certain ship refused to take up an excellent appointment in order that he might stay on over the shooting competition and try to wrest the trophy from its holder, the *Exmouth*.

Under the title of "An Incursion into Diplomacy," Sir A. Conan Doyle wrote in the *Cornhill* for June 1905 a lively account of the venture. In one point, however, his memory has played him false. The correspondence shows that he is just a month out in the date of the inception of the scheme, and consequently in the time allowed for bringing out the pamphlet.

CHAPTER XXIII

GEORGE SMITH AND HIS SUCCESSORS

THE unbroken successes from 1860 to 1880 had brought the House of Smith, Elder into the first flight of publishers. With its flowing stream of business, its firm reputation for honourable and generous dealing and for producing no questionable books, a long prosperity seemed assured. Behind it lay a fortune won in other fields, a safe prop to a comparatively small business. Of George Smith it was jestingly said that after all, literature, like blood, is thicker than mineral water, and literature among other things was a life passion of his. Having brought the firm to this happy point, he desired, as he grew older, to hand over the management to the younger representatives of his own family, if it should prove a field congenial to them. Accordingly, in 1881 he introduced his elder son, the late George Murray Smith, into the business, where he remained nine years. Repeated illness, however, made it necessary for him to live in the country, and though he inherited the business *flair* for important undertakings, his heart was not in the more meticulous work of business letters and literary detail. Leaving the firm in 1890, he devoted himself to other interests, especially the Midland Railway, of which he ultimately became chairman. His place was taken by his brother Alexander. Then, in 1894, the latter was joined by Reginald Smith, who had married George Smith's youngest daughter the year before. Finally, when Alexander Murray Smith retired in 1899 to devote himself to the social work which was his deepest interest, Reginald was left in sole control until his death at Christmas, 1916.

Reginald John—known to his early intimates as Jack—Smith was the son of John Smith of Britwell House, Oxon., and was born on May 30, 1857. A “colleger” of Eton and then a Kingsman, he was intensely loyal to King’s, to Eton, and especially to “college.” Any one who shared in their traditions had an instant passport to his interest. At Cambridge, where he won distinction in the examination for the Chancellor’s Medals and a first-class in the Classical Tripos, 1880, he took his LL.M. as well as his M.A. Thereafter he was called to the Bar, becoming a faithful son of the Inner Temple. For the eight years from 1886 to 1894, he was fortunate enough to “devil” for Sir Charles Russell, as he then was, and acted as his “junior” in the defence of Mrs. Maybrick. In this, as in all his legal work, his painstaking care, his lucid arrangement of the material, his invincible courtesy and kindness, were deeply appreciated by his colleagues and his clients.

When he definitely retired from the bar in 1894, he applied for “silk,” and, as a rising junior, was granted this farewell distinction.

Meantime, like many young barristers, he had done some share of writing for the press. For example, in 1883 he is writing Notes on International Copyright in the *Pall Mall Gazette* for John Morley, and again in the *St. James’*. In 1887 he writes for Mr. Lathbury in the *Guardian* on the Ecclesiastical Commission. In 1893 other work in the *Guardian* brought a request from a publisher that he should write a book on the English Bar. For this, however, he was too busy. It is interesting to note, also, that in 1888 he lectures to a Working Men’s Club in Hornsey on the History of an Act of Parliament, and in 1889 is asked to preside two nights a month at the debates of the Polytechnic Parliament. A regular Speaker was especially desired for the forthcoming Home Rule division; the “parliament” included many young members who might defy a fellow-member in the chair.

The law had been a training in logical order and knowledge of men which was to bear good fruit in his new profession.

In him his father-in-law found a continuator of his work, who partook not perhaps of his speculative dash, but of his own sense of right order, his own attraction towards good literature and men of letters, his own standards of action.

Acquaintance with him soon disclosed the qualities that made him the spiritual son of George Smith; the high-mindedness which guided his every act, his straightforward methods of business, his sensitive and scrupulous care that justice—and more than justice—should be done to “the other man,” his readiness to perform on his friends’ and clients’ behalf, countless services which were not in the bond. His ideals were high, and his practice was based on his ideals. All who worked with him, or under him, realized this inward and outward unity in his character, and his unswerving consideration for others met with warm loyalty. Action, indeed, was the simple expression of the inner man, for the ideals which were a living religion to Reginald Smith, found expression rather in a life of higher principle and generous sympathy to his fellows, than in speculative flights and ceremonial pageantry. He was always a loyal and untroubled member of that Church which, from boyhood and youth to middle age, presented itself to him through the high beauty and intellectual colouring of Eton Chapel and King’s and the Temple Church. These things underlay the “lucid common sense” and “insight into character” which the professional interviewer used to set down as his characteristics, and it was a perception of this current of inward thought, lending beauty to outward action, which made a keenly religious friend declare that he found in him, as in George Smith, the best practical fruits of religious faith. “If to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God, is religion—and nothing else is religion—then I am sure I saw this beautifully exemplified, both in George Smith, and in yourself, and this is one, amongst a hundred other reasons, why I find

myself drawn with such affectionate confidence towards you both." Friendship with him could make a man "think a little better of mankind." It was remarked that even a very short acquaintance with him, left a very enduring stamp on the feelings and memory.

Dr. Wilson, that great-hearted man who was the soul of the Antarctic Expedition, as Scott was its spirit, wrote of Reginald Smith as "the friend whose friendship has made all but the very highest principles in life impossible," "the memory of whom, on the Barrier, will be a help to achieve, and an incentive to return."

Of him, also, it was said by one who had good opportunity of judging: "That optimism is no vain creed will be admitted by every one who had the good fortune to be brought into touch with the editor of the *Cornhill*, Reginald Smith, whom to have known was, in itself, a liberal education in human kindness, in thoughtful courtesy, and in love of letters" (E. T. Cook).

The bond of friendship between publisher and authors is signalised by the number of books dedicated to him. A. C. Benson dedicated "The Leaves of the Tree" "to Reginald Smith, once my fagmaster, now my publisher, always my friend." So Mrs. Humphry Ward dedicated to him "The Mating of Lydia;" Miss Susan Macnaughtan "Some Elderly People," and Miss Betham-Edwards "Hearts of Alsace." To his memory Mr. Eric Parker dedicated "Shooting Days" and Major Hesketh Prichard "Wildest Britain" in 1921.

On joining the firm, Reginald Smith began by doing much of the general reading for the firm, as well as taking his share in the business management. When, on Mr. St. Loe Strachey's departure to join Mr. Hutton on the *Spectator*, Reginald Smith became editor of the *Cornhill*, a share of the reading was entrusted to the late J. B. Atlay, son of the Bishop of Hereford, a barrister of the Middle Temple, gifted with a keen legal mind, and a strong Conservative trend in Church and politics and social outlook; a student of history, who had taken a First in the History School

at Oxford in 1881, and was possessed, moreover, of a wide knowledge of English literature and a stern critical faculty.

Finally, in the autumn of 1901, the present writer was invited by Reginald Smith to join him as literary adviser.

George Smith was already sixty-nine when he began to content himself with a lesser share in the active business of the house. This time he was not to be consumed by superabundance of unemployed energy. Thus he writes airily from Ems, on a holiday in 1893: "What a blessed thing is idleness and how rapidly it grows on one. I am already beginning to understand why X. since his retirement thinks that he has done a hard day's work when he has written three letters. All this means that you must not expect to hear often from me from Ems."

Still he visited the office, and kept his finger on the pulse of the business. To his juniors he gave much wise counsel from his long experience of men and business, whether in person, or when absent from London, by letter, in reply to Reginald Smith's regular reports. Now he discusses the balance of risk and profit in accepting a MS., now he suggests a prudent method of tackling a big proposition such as a National Dictionary of English Language and Literature, or of stopping an American infringement of copyright. He is against making a comprehensive arrangement for his future work with an author whose novels are unequal, and who has already reached, if he has not passed, the high-water mark of his popularity. Meeting "Pen" Browning in 1895, he induces him to select and copy out a number of Mrs. Browning's letters, with a view to publication. Some few had appeared long before. From this came the plan of publishing the Browning Love Letters. He realises the necessity of making a radical change in the *Cornhill* in 1895, and, loth as he is, no less than Reginald Smith, to hurt Payn's feelings, he fears there is no help for it. "It will make it easier that nothing will be taken from his income;" and when the editorship finally came to Reginald Smith, he was ready once

more, as in old times, with suggestions for the literary conduct of the magazine on its new course.

Early in 1895, a certain author, who had made an arrangement with Smith, Elder, through an agent, for the publication of a volume of short stories, came to the conclusion that, as short stories were far less popular than novels, his trusted friends in the firm were likely to make a loss. He wrote, therefore, to propose that a ~~smaller~~ sum be paid him in advance.

It was quite true, George Smith wrote to his son-in-law, about the comparative value of the book of short stories, but that was neither here nor there.

"I would tell him that you thought it very handsome of him, etc. (you know how to put it better than I do), but that he must do you the favour of allowing you to hold by your bargain. You might say, if you liked, that it would be so contrary to the traditions of the firm to amend an arrangement with an author to his disadvantage, that you thought it would give your father-in-law a fit if it came to his knowledge."

In the spring of the same year is a very penetrating letter on the question of setting up an agency in the United States.

"I have read your very clear and complete exposition of the present condition of matters in regard to the sale of Copyrights and Books in America. You have covered the whole ground.

"There can be no question as to the advantage of S. E. & Co. having a house of business in America, but I do not think that the business is at present large enough to warrant the establishment of a branch house in America. Nor do I believe that such a business could be conducted permanently in conjunction with another firm. There would be many difficulties and jealousies which it would be difficult to deal with. It might be possible, but I doubt it. What I have thought of—for my mind has been running in the same direction as yours—is that it might be possible to establish a Limited Company in America—the shares to be held by London publishers who have not a business in the United States—and their publications to be sold on commission by the Company. The details of the scheme would

require to be worked out, but the general idea would be, that the commission received by the Company would pay the expenses, and leave some profit for division among the shareholders, and that the English publisher would get all the profit on his books, less the commission charged by the Company. The Manager in America might be paid by a salary, with a percentage on the profits, or might be provided with a certain number of shares, on certain conditions. This is very rough idea of the scheme, but it will suffice to show you what I have in my mind."

There is sound advice from the commercial side, as to the policy of printing a cheap edition of a standard work while the demand for the previous and higher-priced editions is still active.

And a letter from a correspondent, "which neither requires nor deserves an answer," calls forth the remark that "it is always, I think, a mistake to try to be epigrammatic in a business letter."

Characteristic, also, is his remark on Moberly Bell's idea of dealing with the "D. N. B." as he had dealt with the "Encyclopædia Britannica"; "unless I am reduced to absolute destitution, I will have none of it" (1899). His own plans did not involve advertising after the manner of the *Times*.

The way in which he associated his young partner with him when interviewing an author is excellently illustrated by an extract from the diary of Major Hesketh Prichard, recording a visit to Waterloo Place to discuss the MS. of his first novel, which had been under the consideration of the firm.

"The other day I went to see Messrs. Smith, Elder & Company to talk about 'A Modern Mercenary.' Have had a great many letters, and was keen to see the writer.

"In the large front room, I surprised two gentlemen by walking in on the heels of the announcing clerk. One was old—about seventy, I should think—Mr. George Smith, I suppose, but am not sure. The other was the writer of the 'happily concluded letters.'

"The MS. of 'A Modern Mercenary' lay on the table before Mr. George Smith, who took up the parable, was kindly, but assured me that 'it is good, good enough to tell me that, one day

to come, you will do much better. He said I was young, and asked me if I had ever been in the army. I said 'No,' but that my father had.

"He told me again that I was young, and asked me if I would like to hear an old man's advice. 'Then,' he said, 'I give you Thackeray's words: "Do your damndest."' "

"He repeated this several times, and asked me if we were working at another novel. I said 'Yes.' He said he would like to see it some day. The other gentleman must be his son; he said he was Reginald Smith. . . . They were very kindly."

From the very first George Smith expresses his pleasure in Reginald's good sense in business matters, and his "diplomatic success" in dealing with the notoriously sensitive race of literary people.

When the letters of Charles Lamb, afterwards edited by E. V. Lucas and published under the title of "Charles Lamb and the Lloyds," were in the market, Reginald Smith posted off to Birmingham, and bought them from the owner. Thereupon his father-in-law congratulates him on "a score made absolutely and entirely off his own bat," adding,

"The transaction is a striking example of the difference between the old and the new régime. I should no more have thought of going to Birmingham after the letters, than of—well, anything you like." (In short), "If I believed in the transmigration of souls, I should suppose that you had been a publisher in your previous existence."

This active and helpful interest lasted as long as his strength endured, and this, cultivated and maintained by his favourite exercise of riding, overpassed the traditional limit of threescore years and ten. In 1895, however, his health began to fail somewhat, but he bore the slowly increasing burden of a troublesome ailment with a fine and cheerful fortitude. It was not till the beginning of 1901 that this grew serious; an operation was performed on January 11, successfully, but he did not regain strength. Hoping for better results in country air, he was moved,

at his own desire, in March, to Admiral Egerton's house, at St. George's Hill, Weybridge, which was rented for a month or two. Here, however, he gradually sank, and died on April 6. He was buried in the churchyard of St. Mary's, Byfleet. London, however, possesses the commemorative tablet set up in St. Paul's Cathedral, bearing the following inscription :—

TO THE MEMORY OF
GEORGE M. SMITH
MARCH 19 1824 APRIL 6 1901
TO WHOM ENGLISH LITERATURE OWES THE
DICTIONARY OF NATIONAL BIOGRAPHY AND
WHOSE WARMTH OF HEART ENDEARED
HIM TO MEN OF LETTERS OF HIS TIME
THIS TABLET IS ERECTED BY FRIENDS
WHO LOVED HIM

CHAPTER XXIV

PUBLISHING METHODS

IN the general policy of publishing, Reginald Smith followed the lines laid down by his father-in-law with the constant aim of maintaining the firm's high tradition of literary quality. He would not touch that class of publication which a certain authority described as "not literature, but will sell." To publish novels that could only be floated by a subsidy from their authors was to ruin himself in the eyes of the booksellers. Small commission books, and pamphlets, save where some important principle was at stake, were ruled out as involving more trouble than they were worth. Hard experience had shown how seldom translations paid their way. Not even the Bismarck book succeeded, for all its special interest. Nor were many undertaken among the translations offered. The English versions too often ranged from indifferent to atrocious, and the cost of really first-rate work was rarely recouped by the sales, considering that a proportion of the most interested readers would prefer to read the original. Collections of short stories and magazine articles were rarely self-supporting, and for what he used to call "tea-table history" he had no more admiration than for books where the text was merely a padding for pretty pictures. For various reasons he looked askance at airy propositions for founding new magazines or reviews or embarking upon colossal dictionaries in the wake of the "D. N. B.," while extremism for the sake of extremism was no recommendation to him. In regard to novels, he would publish neither claptrap nor stories unlikely to pay their own way; neither the ill-written nor the unclean.

In earlier days it may be noted that the objection to "Not literature, but will sell" prevailed against Ouida, who was very

insistent in combating the literary and constructive objections raised in Smith Williams's letters, and trying to convict him of inconsistency in his criticisms while she set forth her literary aim of the expression of passion.

As regards very cheap editions of novels at 6*d.* and 7*d.* success is only possible for publishing firms who control a large printing plant. Others, it was well known, had burned their fingers over them. Aware of this, Reginald Smith, though publishing the "Waterloo" series at 3*s.* 6*d.*, was content to sell the 6*d.* and 7*d.* rights to the firms who could best deal with them.

It has already been recorded that Smith, Elder never established a regular educational department and that the medical department had somewhat shrunk. The great characteristic, however, of practically all the firm continued to publish, whether in letters or biography, travels, fiction, or popular science, was its sound literary quality.

Of children's books, Smith, Elder had published many in early days, some instructive or didactic, some simply to amuse, fairy stories and so forth, amongst the writers of these being Miss Harriet Parr, "Holme Lee." But this class of book became less frequent from the 'seventies on; the ordinary boys' or girls' book became too far removed from literature to enter the firm's purview. It need hardly be said that Mr. Augustine Birrell's "The Bold Pecopin," from Victor Hugo, Mrs. de la Pasture's "An Unlucky Family," "The Scarlet Herring," Judge Parry, and Lady Ridley's "The Sparrow with One White Feather," which were published by Reginald Smith, belonged to a very different class of children's story. Latterly, also, the format of the illustrated Christmas book which found favour with the regular booksellers and the book departments of the big stores and were stocked by them at a specially low rate, had come to be a matter of avoirdupois rather than of elegance. Purchasers liked seemingly to have something very solid for their money, a gift that could not look trifling. However, in 1912,

Reginald Smith resolved to make trial of the Christmas market and see whether the public would not appreciate well-written stories, illustrated and presented in a more pleasing format. He issued three such : "Oddle and Iddle—or The Goblins of Aloe Shamba," by Hon. Mrs. Eric Collier ; "Magic Dominions," by A. F. Wallis ; and "Two Troubadours," by Esmé Stuart. But the sellers of Christmas books fought shy of the innovation, and the venture failed.

In an after-dinner speech Reginald Smith once described the essence of the work of a publisher. It is, in fact, a series of adventures in which the publisher stakes his money on his literary judgment, while in the preparation of the book he has to be the sympathetic counsellor of the author, now advising him as the family solicitor, now as the advocate predicting the verdict of the jury, or again reading the book through the eyes of the "man in the street" or through the spectacles of the reviewer. His best pleasure is to win the confidence of the author ; to win that and the confidence of the public is his best reward. He is a trustee for the author ; he is equally a trustee for the public in the matter of offering it books of literary merit and worthy purpose. Yet as an amusing instance of the manner in which publishing is regarded by the world, he told a story, which he told again at the dinner of the Authors Club on January 22, 1912, how a distinguished authoress, speaking to him of the career of her son, said, "At all events, if he can do nothing else, he can be a publisher !"

The prime cause of all difficulties that arise between author and publisher is the fact that the publisher is exploiting another man's work for their joint benefit, and while he brings to this work his business machinery, his experience, his skill in dealing with men, he is, at the same time, a trustee of the author's interests, and from the nature of the case, a trustee with endless business opportunities of working the partnership of trust in his own favour.

Contributory causes abound ; the author in general is ignorant of practical details in the business and of the need of maintaining a margin of stability in what is after all a speculative business. He forgets that every book is a separate speculation, just as every play is, and the uncertainty of gauging the success of a play is notorious. A book is not like a good soap or a patent medicine, once bought continually bought ; indeed, the only continuity in books is that if a book succeeds, the author's next book is helped at the start, and if it fails, the next book is severely handicapped.

In March 1887, when a vigorous correspondence was being carried on about publishers' methods, George Smith wrote to the *Times* giving a specimen balance sheet to illustrate his own methods of dealing with a half-profits book, presented in a form always accessible to an author and intelligible to him. The royalty system has this great advantage, that it is the very simplest, and involves no complex details of business. But even here the question of advertisement is a thorny one. The amount spent on advertisement is almost invariably complained of as being either too much or too little ; too much, if it continues and, as one of the costs of production, is set off against the gross proceeds of the book ; too little, if the book is not advertised as lavishly as some other which is on a wave of popularity. It is a popular fallacy to believe that advertising will sell a book, unless it is in itself a good seller. Each book, said an American publisher, has a predestined limit to its public ; reach that limit, and further advertisement is thrown away. George Smith pointed out that his method was to fix a sum for advertisement in each case, and not to exceed it.

You cannot, indeed, compel booksellers and bookstall holders to speculate in books unless they are actually going or promising to go like the proverbial hot cakes, nor compel the public to buy. The cheery amateur cries : " If I had £20,000 I would publish really interesting books which people don't care for now,

and create a taste for them." Perhaps he has a further £20,000 on which to subsist in the mean time. Another delightful theory, held by some authors, is that a publisher should always pay down a big sum in advance of receipts, not because the book is necessarily worth so much, but to ensure his "pushing" the book! It is like tying a 16-lb. weight round a swimmer's neck to make sure that he shall strike out hard in deep water.

For Reginald Smith the interest of publishing lay mainly in books and their authors. To make the business a success was naturally his wish, but the accumulation of careful pence was not his primary object. While possessing a sound outlook on the larger business problems which came before him, his eye was not fixed on competitive profits or speculation upon the person of his clients. He did not spend his hours calculating fine-drawn gains and minute economies as the *raison d'être* of his management. Such details he left chiefly in the hands of his trusted subordinates who had been with George Smith before him, and if some belauded "up-to-date" methods were not adopted in Waterloo Place, at all events the less showy certainties which some like to call old-fashioned, held firm there. The profits from a business run upon such lines were not of speculative magnitude, and indeed much work was done in the interests of authors for which he received no return in cash nor deigned to ask commission. His chief concern, as it was his chief pleasure, in the business, was to become the ideal middleman between author and public; responsible to the public for his choice of books; responsible to the author for the best literary and business environment, for freedom from business troubles and a fair share, indeed it was often more than would have been considered a fair share, of the return. He took infinite pains to win confidence in the literary judgment as well as the business conduct of the firm. It was not only that selected MSS. usually had to survive a second critic before coming up for his final decision, but everything

that was published, whether as a book or in the *Cornhill*, passed under his own eye. This involved a good deal of work even when he was on holiday at Cortachy; regular reports to read, discuss, or approve from the heads of the various departments; literary reports and MSS.—as few as possible—from his reader in charge, and some personal letters which demanded personal reply. Perhaps the most complete rest that he achieved was on the short sea voyages he took now and then, when posts could not intrude as they managed to do even on the occasions when he went abroad in the spring.

Moreover, he was always on the look-out for possible *Cornhill* articles; literary addresses that might be republished, subjects of topical but not merely journalistic interest and men who could write on them.

All this involved an immense amount of careful correspondence cast into good and polished epistolary form, sedulously avoiding what literary folk would look upon as a styleless business letter. The aid of the typewriter was only invoked in the case of the more formal letters; for in corresponding direct with authors he was very conscious of the touch of intimacy and personal concern bestowed by the writing of a letter with the pen. Of these, many were in his own hand, often felicitously incorporating phrases from the morning's discussion of the subject. Nothing pleased him more than to report some success—a good initial sale, a word of praise from a competent judge; and as has been said, he was ever at pains to take the edge off an inevitable refusal, no less than to settle the various troubles which might beset an author. Thus he worked hard, harder perhaps than he knew, for he put something of himself into everything that he did. Each letter was individual, unhurried, complete; as one friend put it, letters from Reginald Smith had for him, besides the charm of authenticity, a charm of leisureliness, as if he had no other work on hand. So, too, an author who had come to an interview would be touched by finding that his interlocutor had

bestowed so much time and thought on his cares and problems, and would go away with any small cloud cleared up.

But there was another kind of letter that Reginald Smith loved to write. Correspondence with old and trusted friends of the *Cornhill* often brought words of praise for new writers appearing in its pages. These words of praise he enjoyed passing on to the objects of such pleasant criticism, to their great encouragement, for as one of them, who had written a capital frontier story, replied: "It is just the praise from writers like Sir A. Conan Doyle that gives the beginner the stimulus to carry on." And it brought the conviction that literary work was of no good unless it were of the best, together with the determination to be content with nothing less.

He would also find time to forward specially appreciative notices from the papers with a note in his own hand, as if, his grateful friends remarked, he had no more pressing business to do.

The practice of mending a bargain in favour of the other side is little known in business circles outside publishing. Smith, Elder were not alone among their fellows in making additional payments to their authors if a book which they had purchased outright made an unexpectedly large profit. In the same spirit in which, as has been told, George Smith doubled Thackeray's salary upon the wonderful success of the first number of the *Cornhill*, he paid substantial sums to other authors when their books were a success beyond his expectation.

When S. Baring Gould had failed to realise that sale of the copyright included translation rights, Smith, Elder transferred to him the German translation fee for "Mehalah"; they ceded serial rights outside Great Britain in the case of Christie Murray's "Rainbow Gold," and shared with the author their dramatic rights in Merriman's "The Sowers" and "With Edged Tools," and in more than half a dozen cases gave over the profits from sixpenny editions, as being presumably a kind of

windfall outside the possibilities of publishing contemplated in the original agreement.

It was the literary policy of the firm to continue Smith Williams' practice of writing a letter of criticism to the author with a rejected MS., indicating the main reasons for rejection and often pointing out weaknesses of treatment or suggesting lines that would be more fruitful in future work. The classical example of such a letter is that to Charlotte Brontë rejecting "The Professor," which led to "Jane Eyre" and its triumph. The indirect consequences of this famous letter have been recorded in Chapter VII.

The policy of writing a letter with a rejected MS. had a bad as well as a good side. It meant an extra expenditure of time and thought on busy days; it sometimes led to argument, mostly about unessential details, and perhaps a revision of small points where, as some sage said, there was nothing wrong but the whole. Indeed, reconstruction of a novel is rarely successful. Inexperience is unripe for the task; over-experience may have been hardened in bad literary ways. An historical work, however, or a biography sometimes, is easier to recast. But in these cases the critical letter has occasionally been of the *sic vos non vobis* kind. The rejected author accepts the criticism, mends his work, and takes it to another publisher.

On the other hand, in return for "the disagreeable task, only performed *by a Friend*, of telling the truth about" a MS., Smith, Elder received a very large number of grateful letters from young writers, who, however dashed by the rejection, were enabled to realise the care and sympathy meted out to their work, and ultimately profited by the criticisms. They found these things a strong contrast to the customary formal note of rejection, which had no balm for the ardent spirit, no mitigation of the "disheartening experience known as 'going through the mill.'" The justification for the practice lies in such a letter as Miss Mary Coleridge wrote in 1903 when introducing the MS. of a

young friend instead of letting it go in unbefriended by the ordinary channels.

“ You know how sensitive young authors are and how much a kind word—even if it be a word of refusal—may help and may spare them. One such I remember long ago, from your reader, when I sent the MS. of my first book, and the kindness of it has remained with me ever since.”

Even one of that much-abused clan of literary agents, who stand ready to absorb shocks and what not “ between the fell, incensed points ” of authors and publishers, was moved to write in 1912 :—

“ May I step a little out of the ordinary course of business and tell you how much I appreciate what you have written to the author of the story . . . ? Sometimes we who move so much amongst the small men of the publishing world are inclined to despair of the future of authorship and literature, but so long as firms like yours endure I see we need not give up hope.”

Indeed, Gilbert’s “ pain that is almost a pleasure ” seems to have been realised by some of the sufferers. “ If this is the way MSS. are to be rejected,” wrote one, “ it should become in future quite a pleasure to be reckoned among the unlucky.” And another, “ Your refusals are so charming and kind that one can almost enjoy them, and is even persuaded that you are right ! ” And a third, “ There was a certain minister of the eighteenth century whose name I have forgotten who was supposed to confer more gratification by his refusals than others by their acceptances, and I think, if I may be allowed the familiarity, that you must be one of his descendants.”

The strangest reply to a rejection was from a lady who warmly thanked the firm for helping her thus to find her real vocation. It turned out that for years her sleep had been haunted by visions of her deceased mother, bidding her undertake some great work in which she was to find her soul’s fulfilment. Unfortunately the daughter was not informed what this work was to be ;

she had tried one thing after another without success, and latest the novel whose rejection now proved that her true vocation lay elsewhere.

Another submitted a quantity of verse to learn whether he was really a poet or should devote himself to prose. Sometimes the request for literary advice would come unaccompanied by a MS. On the strength of being a regular reader of *Cornhill*, one correspondent ventures to ask the editor to recommend him the names of any authors, such as Macaulay or Mommsen ("History of Rome," Dickson's translation), noted for a vigorous and ponderous style, careful perusal of which would enable him to acquire a large vocabulary and to express himself forcibly. It is uncertain how this seeker after style meant to distribute his epithets; perhaps the solemn recurrence in the Mommsen of that wonderful phrase "it falls to be added that" may help the curious reader to decide for himself.

Occasionally there would be a ruffling of feathers. One day a lady rushed into the office in high agitation, MS. in hand. Breathlessly she explained that she had a highly strung imaginative temperament; that she was seized with a deep and passionate idea and had spent four weeks all alone in a Chelsea studio putting her inmost soul on paper; the previous night the work had received its last touches, and now she must have instant decision, because she was going off to America in three days. It proved to be a wild and hysterical effusion; but the excited author bitterly ascribed its rejection and some marginal queries which she did not understand to the spite of the reader at having been compelled to take the MS. out of its turn.

Some lighter episodes may at once illustrate the attitude of authors towards publishers' readers, and afford a spice of amusement. A writer of confirmed journalese, on hearing that his style of treating the subject was unsuitable, indignantly affirmed that a publisher's business was to publish, and let the public judge by the style, thus abolishing the function of the reader as

a "taster." At the opposite extreme is the author pathetically anxious to make certain that his work shall be read, and read thoroughly, by that irresponsible autocrat of whose callous negligence such stories were whispered abroad; now that he steals the author's ideas for his own books, now that he makes up his mind without going through the MS. from the first sheet to the last.

A most ingenious device to test the perseverance of the reader was the work of a retired army officer. It recalls the moral story of our youth, wherein a pious but wily aunt gives her schoolboy nephew a Bible and exacts a promise that he will read it through in the course of the term. Of course, when the holidays come, he vows he has kept his promise, but is properly convicted of sin when she ruffles the unturned pages and reveals the five-pound note that had been awaiting a patient searching of the Scriptures. So our gallant warrior had inserted, here and there, between the 931 pages of his MS. small confetti which he expected to drop out as the pages were turned, for he had been told by a publisher friend that readers often rejected MSS. without reading them.

First he sent it to Literary Agency A. to be read for a fee. Obviously it was read, for all the confetti disappeared. But when Agency A. issued an approving verdict and asked for a further fee before proceeding to try to place it, Mars struck and sent it direct to Waterloo Place. From Waterloo Place the vast mass returned with only two of the confetti absent, one near the beginning, the other near the end. "No doubt," he riposted, "the MSS. lack 'brightness of representation and literary artistry,' but it was very clever of your reader to find that out without reading it."

Well does the hapless reader remember that vasty mass of nearly 1,000 large sheets, huger to look upon than a full-blown Liddell and Scott or a volume of the "Encyclopædia Britannica," a work of monumental size and monumental dulness.

Remembers, too, the little round confetti, a number of which he turned without dislodging them. But heaven forefend that, decisive dulness once proven, a reader should waste his time by ploughing such barren sands to the uttermost. Yet the gallant author added that he had also sent the MS. to Literary Agency B., which enterprising concern, as he dubbed it, returned the work confessedly without reading more than the synopsis and calculating the tonnage. No responsible firm, they averred, would be likely to take up a story of such length and character in those days.

The crowning touch was that our soldier marched into the office, demanded an interview with the principal, and presented his letter containing these revelations like a pistol at the head of Reginald Smith, demanding satisfaction. The reader was summoned to the conclave, and had to tell the old gentleman with all possible politeness that his work was hopeless and had absolutely choked him off; it opened with twenty-seven pages of unnecessary description before a single word was spoken by any character.

Some of the literary aspirants who approached Waterloo Place were comical to a degree. One young woman sending a collection of stories, explains their genesis, intermingled with the family history of herself and her orphan sister, and how "our aged grandma and friends are very kind to us," and how, such is her persistence, she had sent a book of poems to sixteen publishers, ourselves the sixteenth, so that she remembered our name when it was the turn of the stories. The stories returned, we were presented with a copy of a local paper, containing a poem of hers and a book of verse, one piece in which celebrates her future husband riding on an elephant. The piece of domestic history which follows calls up a wonderful picture. "He is fifty years my senior, but I am sure he will make me happy, and I shall have *every opportunity* of getting on in my literary career."

CHAPTER XXV

THE "TIMES" BOOK CLUB

THE part taken by Reginald Smith in the famous struggle with the *Times* Book Club, withstanding alike its blandishments and its boycott, was in defence not only of the publishers and booksellers, but of the authors also, whose interests in the long run would inevitably be damaged by debasement of the literary currency consequent upon the Book Club's methods.

There was much ingenuity in the original idea of the founders of the *Times* Book Club, who had first made a fortune by persuading the public to buy the already antiquated ninth edition of the "Encyclopædia Britannica" in the belief that no tenth edition should be published, and added to it by afterwards publishing a Supplement which was virtually a new edition. The Book Club was primarily designed to increase the circulation of the *Times*. A larger circulation would vastly increase the revenue from advertisements. To join the Book Club it was only necessary to become an annual subscriber to the *Times*. Take the *Times* instead of your usual morning paper, and a greater than Mudie's should be added to you gratis, a new library prompt, efficient and comprehensive beyond any as yet conceived. Any book desired, however costly, should be supplied on the spot. The Book Club would also act as book-seller on the largest scale, besides being the centre for other activities.

The profit on this big undertaking, of course, was to come mainly out of the expansion of the *Times*, and in a less degree by the selling of new books. But the cost of the circulating library was to be reduced and customers attracted by another device

which provoked the "Book War." It was the custom of all circulating libraries to sell off old books cheap, six months after publication; the T. B. C. now proposed that at any moment after being put in circulation and becoming technically "soiled," books "as good as new" were to be sold to subscribers at a price very near the trade price at which they had been originally bought, or with a larger discount on purchase of a large number, but all below the retail price charged by the booksellers for actual new books.

With such an inducement ordinary booksellers would be cut out; the increase of purchasers through the Book Club would enable the Club to place larger orders with the publishers at special rates, and thus get the use of books in its circulating library for next to nothing, while at the same time establishing a preponderance, if not a monopoly, in the bookselling trade, with what ultimate results might be not obscurely guessed at, such as the "booming" or "crabbing" of books for reasons other than literary, and the putting of pressure on the publishers.

The production of a monopoly menacing alike to publishers and booksellers, was one side of the *Times* campaign. The other was to bring about a general cheapening in the price of books so that the Book Club's outlay would be lessened and their turnover increased. A pamphlet was issued full of engaging figures as to the cost of book production, the supposed profits of publishers, and the amount by which these might be cut down to suit the purses of the cruelly despoiled public. The scheme pictured nothing but large editions of successful novels, never destined to fall short of ample sales. Its colours did not fail for lack of imagination. Pleasant, indeed, the business of a publisher if every book were assured of a minimum sale of 5,000.

But the public at large were charmed by the prospect of cheap books; charmed also were many authors by the thought of the vast sales promised by this new Aladdin who offered the public books "as good as new" at the price of old with no hint

of diminished royalties. A cry was raised against those publishers who would not let their new books be sold second-hand before they were fairly launched, and who refused to deal with the Book Club unless it would agree to the customary period of six, afterwards settled as three, months from publication before which a "discount" book was not to be sold off as second-hand.

Some authors then insisted that their own books should be sold to the Book Club on pain of leaving their publishers; a number of others, however, saw in the proposed debasement of their currency a grave danger to themselves and their rights. The *Times* had no right to compel them, nor could the Society of Authors bind them, to sell their property on terms to which they objected. If they refused to deal with the *Times*, they could instruct their publishers to that effect; if they wished to deal with the *Times* against the will of the publisher, they could themselves form an association for that purpose.

Let their publishers once be defeated they would have to submit later to whatever change might suit the *Times*.

Such were the arguments of a far-sighted author who wrote to Reginald Smith then, as again in 1916, President of the Publishers' Association. The latter replied that the Association entirely agreed with this statement of the author's right to make stipulations of this kind, but thought it would not be workable to fix different "close times" for individual books, although it is true that books vary in the rate at which they attain ripeness and full sales.

The further devices of the Book Club need not here be pilloried. Suffice it to say that the publishers who stood out refused to supply books at trade terms to the Book Club; it had to buy at the ordinary retail price. The *Times* could not refuse to let the Literary Supplement review these publishers' books, but insisted that they should be marked with an asterisk to show that they were not stocked at the Book Club. But authors began to suspect that reviews of their books were

manipulated in order to hit their publishers. And indeed *Business-Times* was quite capable of interfering with *Literary-Times* to serve ulterior purposes. The beginning of the end came with the famous review of the "Letters of Queen Victoria," into which *Business-Times* "spatchcocked" the sentence that in publishing the book at such an inflated price, Mr. John Murray had sold the person of his late Sovereign for thirty pieces of silver. In the libel action which ensued, Mr. Moberly Bell and Mr. Hooper did not come well out of the witness-box and the *Times* was mulcted in £7,000 damages. The T. B. C. capitulated and reasonable terms were arranged as to the earliest date for selling second-hand copies of new books, whether published net or subject to discount. These were agreed to by all booksellers and circulating libraries. So far as bookselling was concerned, the T. B. C. ranked itself among the latter and renounced its efforts to establish a monopoly.

CHAPTER XXVI

MORE FRIENDS

UNLIKE so many of Reginald Smith's friends, Mrs. de la Pasture did not come to Waterloo Place through the medium of the *Cornhill*, though James Payn was the reader who discerned the merit of her first novel, "Deborah of Tod's," the beginning of a long connection. The MS. had had a curious history. Publisher A. had refused it; publisher B. had put it aside for dismissal. Then, to do a kindness to a relation of a certain literary agent, it was left with him to place, and thus came under the discriminating eye of Payn.

Thereafter all her books except one, a temporary "deviation from the straight path," were first issued by Reginald Smith, two, as has already been noted, appearing in the *Cornhill*, and one being that charming children's story, "An Unlucky Family."

The friendship thus formed with Mrs. de la Pasture was one of the happiest of the Smith, Elder friendships, and ripened into a close intimacy with the publisher and his wife. It was a friendship which in matters of business was marked by a singular loyalty and generosity on both sides, felicitously symbolised by her sprightly comedietta which, as has been told, was acted at Green Street in honour of the *Cornhill* Jubilee. It was a friendship, moreover, doubly grateful for the fact that it brought Mrs. de la Pasture other friendships, and especially seven years of close friendship with the old man whose fresh spirit age could not wither, Sir Theodore Martin. Reginald Smith effected the introduction in 1901 by giving him "Catherine of Calais" to read.

The personal note recurs very strongly in his relations with a later group of authors and friends, of whom a few may be cited as examples. Friendship with S. G. Tallentyre (Miss Hall)

began through her brother-in-law, "Henry Seton Merriman," who brought to Waterloo Place "The Money Spinner and Other Character Notes" (1896). The first draft of the book was by S. G. Tallentyre; Merriman, with the touch of the skilled teller of stories, had gone over this and enlarged it, while following as far as possible her excellent style. Thus his name preceded hers on the title-page as having done the lion's share of the work. The book itself was illustrated by Arthur Rackham, whose original drawings were given to Merriman by Reginald Smith as a much-prized gift.

Thereafter S. G. Tallentyre became an occasional but valued contributor to the *Cornhill*, while her studies in French literary history resulted in her attractive books, the "Life of Voltaire" (1903), and "The Friends of Voltaire" (1906).

With Halliwell Sutcliffe, the novelist of the Craven district, a neighbour of the Brontë country, who contributed as serial, "Priscilla of the Good Intent," and several short stories to the *Cornhill*, there was the initial link that both were Kingsmen. Hesketh Prichard, the mighty hunter, first writing in conjunction with his mother under the pseudonym of E. and H. Heron, became a close friend who took constant part in all the sporting activities of Cortachy. Reginald Smith took special satisfaction in his campaign for the protection of the grey seals of Haskeir, opened in the pages of *Cornhill* and carried through Parliament in 1913-14 by the late Hon. Charles Lyell, M.P., himself a Forfarshire neighbour. Very strong, too, was his interest in all he could glean of the notable work done at the front by his friend—Major and D.S.O. and M.C.—in training our snipers till they outshot and utterly suppressed the enemy snipers. But he was not destined to see any account of it, as he surely would have desired, in the *Cornhill*; this was not possible until the war was over.*

* "Some Personal Notes on Sniping and Observation in the War," by Major Hesketh Prichard, D.S.O., M.C., *Cornhill*, March, April, 1919. He died of illness contracted in the Trenches, June 14, 1922.

Mr. A. C. Benson's first contribution to the *Cornhill* was a poem called "Belleisle Castle," in 1883, eleven years before Reginald Smith, his old fagmaster in College at Eton, joined the firm. Writing in 1894 as one who, in addition to his regular work as a master at Eton, was a struggling author trying to make good his footing on the literary ladder, he congratulates his old friend on "the mysterious halo of romance and power" he has attained, "in addition to the halo with which as my kind and paternal fagmaster you have always been invested." It was this kind fagmaster who was subsequently to draw out his special powers and set him on the line in which he achieved high success. For Mr. Benson, who soon came to trust Reginald Smith's judgment in books very completely, always warmly remembered that it was he whose instinct detected the possibilities of interest in the "Upton Letters," and gave him his chance in the *Cornhill*.

This recognition took place just after the New Year 1905. Mr. Benson had left Eton in 1903; he had already published the Life of his father, Archbishop Benson, and was then mainly occupied in editing, with Lord Esher, the "Letters of Queen Victoria." In the spring of 1904 Reginald Smith suggested to him a *Cornhill* article under an official sanction describing his experiences as examiner under the new scheme of entrance to Osborne. This was eagerly read as the first authentic account of the new procedure. An August visit to Cortachy saw the threads of the old friendship picked up again and knitted yet more strongly. Then in the last days of the year he sent to Waterloo Place the MS. of the "Upton Letters," a series made up from the essays and reflections in writing which he found relaxation from the labour of editing Queen Victoria's Letters. Delighted with these, Reginald Smith promptly suggested a *Cornhill* serial of similar letters, written from the point of view of a college don. Under the title of "From a College Window," this appeared in ten parts from July 1905. Published in the autumn of 1906 it reached its eighth edition by Christmas, the "Upton Letters"

having reached its fifth at the corresponding date the year before.

Here was the authentic vein which found and kept a wide and appreciative public. Smith, Elder published fourteen books for him, including two more *Cornhill* series ("At Large" and "The Leaves of the Tree"). On all these he constantly sought and received fruitful suggestion and constructive criticism from Reginald Smith. Whatever the form of the advice given, there was no person in whose flair and instinct for what might be said and what people would like, he trusted more, and in this advice he found the encouragement justified by sound judgment which meant so much to the writer. It would be difficult to find a closer and more fruitful alliance of friendship and literary business.

In addition to his book publications, Mr. Benson contributed a number of separate articles to the *Cornhill*, often on a suggestion from the editor, as for instance that on Jane Austen and Lyme Regis when he was staying at the place himself. Mr. Benson also undertook one of the examination papers "At the Sign of the Plough," on the "Pilgrim's Progress," November 1911. From his pen, too, came the memorial article on Reginald Smith in February 1917.

About six o'clock one autumn evening in 1904, when the office was closing, a caller was shown in. "I am Captain Scott just home from the Antarctic," he said; "will you publish my book for me?" "Certainly," replied Reginald Smith, naming generous terms, whereat the new-comer exclaimed: "That is all very well for me, but where do you come in?" Such was the beginning, not only of a firm business alliance, but of a warm and enduring friendship with both Captain Scott and his inspiring comrade, Dr. Adrian Wilson. They were frequently his guests both at Cortachy and in London, and when the Antarctic called them again in 1910, both men were relieved of anxiety about their nearest and most personal concerns

because they were able to leave their interests in his capable hands. In their distant adventure, also, a new link joined them to Reginald Smith, for his cousin, Apsley Cherry-Garrard, sailed with them as Assistant Zoologist, and among various gifts to his friends, Reginald provided the party with a capital library. The friendship received its final testimony in that last storm-beaten camp upon the Barrier, when foodless and fireless in their un-availing shelter, they calmly awaited the inevitable end. Each painfully tracing his last letters of farewell, took care to add a few lines to this trusted and constant friend and his wife. A memorial article in the *Cornhill* for April 1913 records some of the close personal relations between Waterloo Place and the men of the Antarctic.

With regard to Scott's two books, it may be noted that "The Voyage of the *Discovery*" (2 vols. demy 8vo, 42s.) has sold 3,500 copies, but popular as it was, this was entirely eclipsed by "Scott's Last Expedition," published November 1913, which, though an equally large illustrated book, ran through four editions in as many months, and rapidly sold 13,000 copies at the price of £2 2s.

One cannot but think that this heroic record of lofty adventure, indomitable steadfastness, and open-eyed sacrifice which poured its spirit through the whole nation, was a very real factor in tuning up the manhood of the country for the great struggle so soon to be waged.

Subsequently, a facsimile in colour was made of the *South Polar Times*, an illustrated newspaper produced with the help of the typewriter during the Antarctic winter, to which many members of the expedition contributed under the editorship of Mr. Cherry-Garrard. The work was issued in three parts, two at 5, increased to 6 guineas, and one at 2½, increased to 3 guineas.

In 1914 a smaller volume telling of Scott's life and adventures and intended for young people, was prepared by Mr. Charles

Turley, and published under the title of "The Voyages of Captain Scott." Then, in 1916, Smith, Elder brought out another large volume, "With Scott, the Silver Lining," by Dr. Griffith Taylor, giving the lighter side of life in the Antarctic as well as an account of the geologist's work.

In the same year a concluding aspect of the expedition from the point of view of the relief ships, was published in "The Voyages of the *Morning*," by Captain Gerald S. Doorly, a companion book, as it were, to Mr. Turley's, completing the cycle of Antarctic adventure.

CHAPTER XXVII

IN THE SERVICE OF SMITH, ELDER

THE list of those who served Smith, Elder furnishes an unusual record of long and faithful service. Mention has already been made of the firm's readers and literary advisers, from Smith Williams in 1845 onwards; on the business side the first to be named is Mr. Wooldridge, who was business manager at 65, Cornhill, and had much to do with the successful launching of the *Cornhill Magazine*. He retired a few months after the move to Waterloo Place. During the same period James F. Connell was the country representative of the firm, and continued with Smith, Elder until his death in September 1879.

The most striking link between the old days of the firm and the new was John Aitchison, whose term extended to fifty-nine years. A native of Cupar, Fife, he came in December 1856, at the age of 21; he continued vigorously at work till he was 80. Failing health compelled him to retire in July 1915, and he died in June 1917 at the age of 82.

For forty-five years at Waterloo Place he was business manager—sagacious, careful, possessed of a prudent business instinct that was the flower of long experience, and endowed with a wonderful memory that served him almost infallibly to his last active years. Memory of the last two decades recalls a noteworthy figure squarely built and rather above the middle height, always clad in the formal frock coat. Grey hair and the long grey whiskers of a by-gone fashion enlarged the apparent size of his face and the domed brow set above large grey eyes. Prudent experience spoke in his deliberate tones; he had a very sound "flair" for the business prospects of a book. "Let us hear what the business

instinct says," was a favourite phrase of Reginald Smith when a question of this kind was in the balance, and he would call in Mr. Aitchison to give his opinion.

A whole lifetime thus devoted to the house was of untold value in maintaining the best traditions of its business life, and authors on occasion owed more than they knew to his endless care in looking after their books.

Almost as long in Smith, Elder's service were Charles E. Crouch, fifty-five years, and A. Barnett, fifty-four. Mr. Crouch, who came in 1857, died in harness, 1912. After being in the correspondence and advertisement departments at 65, Cornhill, he became country trade manager at 15, Waterloo Place, and subsequently acted as business correspondent and advertising manager until his appointment, in 1880, as country traveller, a department in which his interest in books and the confidence he inspired among the booksellers stood him in good stead. Mr. Barnett entered the printing office in Old Bailey in 1863, became manager of the country department at 15, Waterloo Place, and eventually manager at the Bride Lane warehouse until 1917. He died in 1919.

Mr. William Partridge came in 1871 as junior clerk, attending on George Smith. After six years of training in the business he was for forty years until 1917 principal accountant, a post for which he was eminently qualified by a clear head and an admirable memory. Here he dealt especially with authors' and publication accounts, so that his handwriting must be curiously familiar to every author who published with Smith, Elder during that period. After the retirement of Mr. Aitchison in 1915 he filled the position of manager, and when the firm to which he had given long years of loyal and devoted service was dissolved in 1917, he was asked to continue his business stewardship with the personal representatives of the house.

In 1873 Mr. H. E. Murray began his forty-four years' service with Smith, Elder. Coming as a boy, very small for his age, he

grew up in the house. From a junior clerk in the production department he passed on to the advertisements, finally coming back to the production department, where it was his pride to turn out books as perfect as might be in every detail from the paper to the illustrations. No better instances of his care can be chosen than the two great Antarctic books, Captain R. F. Scott's "Voyage of the *Discovery*" and "Scott's Last Expedition." These stand as admirable examples of his close attention to the minutest details. Indeed, when the latter book appeared, Mr. Longman, with a publisher's inner appreciation, wrote to congratulate Reginald Smith on so technically perfect a production.

One of the most interesting of branches H. E. Murray's work was in connection with the "Dictionary of National Biography," with the punctual production of which he was concerned from the second year of the venture. Conversant with every detail, he was able to furnish the Oxford University Press with invaluable information when it took over the Dictionary.

In 1917 he entered the service of Messrs. Longmans, but retired in 1919 owing to ill-health.

Mr. William Howard, coming in 1874, remained until 1918, assisting in the adjustment of all matters connected with the transfer of the business, so that his term of service also lasted forty-four years. Beginning as junior clerk attending on George Smith, and incidentally translating for him during several years the German correspondence of the Apollinaris Company then in its infancy, he was given the charge of the business correspondence and advertising departments of the firm and retained the position for twenty-five years. For several years also he was cashier. Subsequently he became personal clerk to Reginald Smith, undertaking a good deal of his more formal correspondence. In this connection he conducted the negotiations—often difficult owing to the feeling on the Continent against this country—for the publication of the many translations of Sir A. Conan Doyle's pamphlet, "The War in South Africa: its

Cause and Conduct," which did such good service to the English cause. A special branch of his work lay in dealing with literary agents and foreign correspondence. In 1918 he joined Messrs. Watt & Son, the literary agents, but after a year was compelled to retire through ill-health.

The year 1874 also saw the advent of Mr. Henry Finch, whose work as book-keeper continued thirty-eight years. He retired at the end of 1912 and died three months later.

Mr. Charles Baker, our energetic town traveller, was with Smith, Elder thirty-four years, from the beginning of 1883 to 1917, when he entered the employ of Collins & Co.

Mr. C. H. Radford, who managed the country department, and later succeeded Mr. Crouch as traveller, was thirty years with Smith, Elder, thereafter proceeding to Constable & Co.

Mr. W. J. Williams came in 1888, and after working under Mr. Aitchison in the production department, took over the advertising. He was specially concerned with the Browning, Gaskell, and Brontë books, and possessed an almost unique knowledge of their MSS. and bibliography, and he had the privilege of assisting Lady Ritchie in organising the Thackeray Centenary celebrations. In 1915, after twenty-seven years with the firm, he obtained a position with Messrs. Williams & Norgate, and from 1917 was at the Ministry of Munitions.

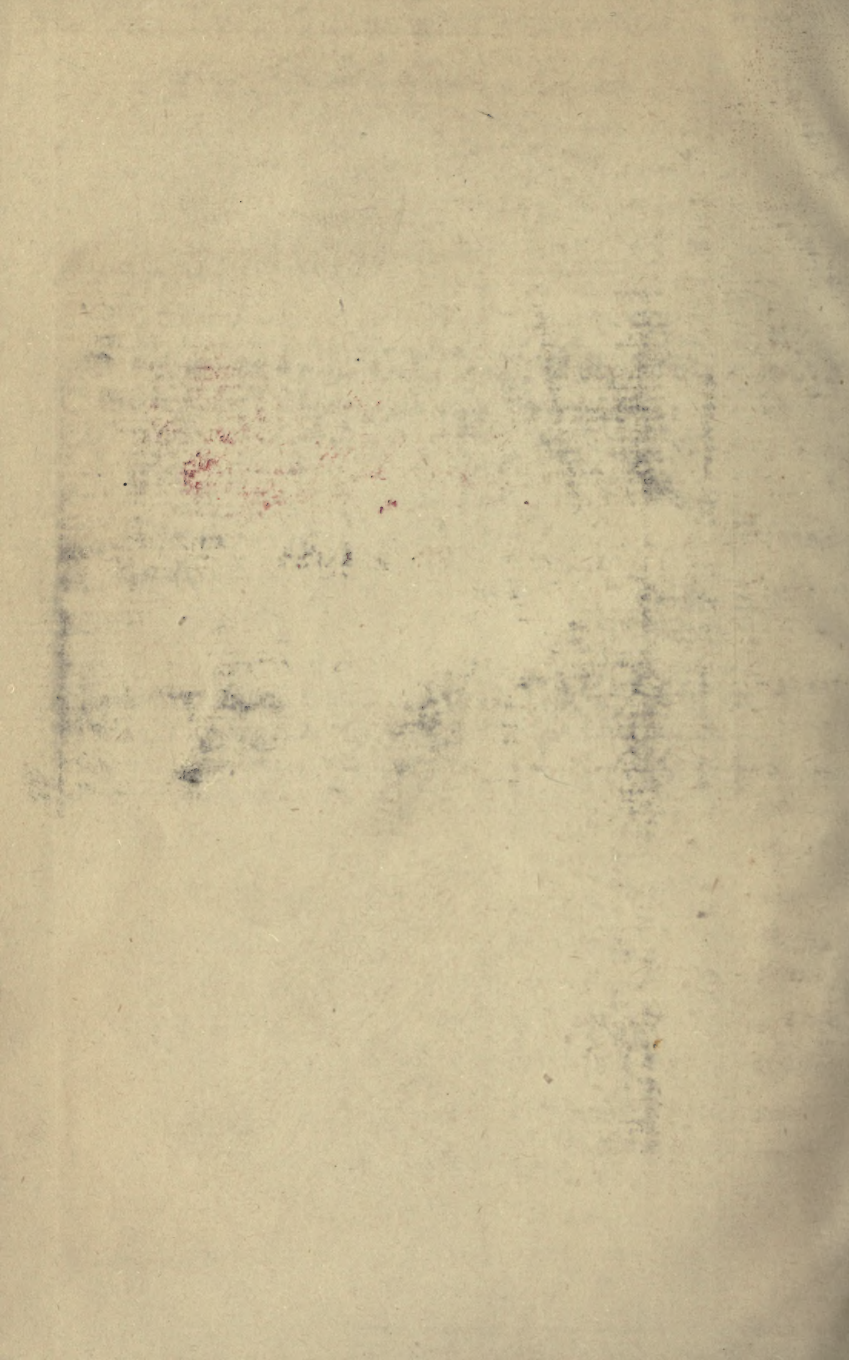
Mr. Roger E. Ingpen, who has since won independent distinction in the field of letters, came in 1882, later assisting with the *Cornhill*, and taking a share in the reading both of articles for the magazine and of book MSS. He also acted as clerk to Reginald Smith until 1900, when he left to join first Harpers and then Hutchinsons.

Mr. S. Burrell was fourteen years at Waterloo Place, coming in 1903 as clerk to the *Cornhill* and then as private clerk to Reginald Smith. In 1917 he obtained a post in the Shipping Claims Department, and after the end of the war an engagement with Messrs. Clancey, Sons & Scott.

Mr. P. B. M. Allan, who came in July 1913 with the eager determination to enter a publishing house and learn its business from the bottom to the top, assisted in particular with the *Cornhill*, acting finally as sub-editor and reading general MSS., though his work was interrupted by war service as captain in the London Scottish, and by the severe illness which at last invalidated him. However, his opportunity came later, and in 1919 he established the publishing firm of Philip Allan & Co.

Rarely, I imagine, has any body of men worked together in a business so harmoniously and with such spirited devotion to their common cause. Pride in the standing of the house joined with affection towards the personalities at the head of it. Long years of common service cemented their bond ever more firmly, and made of them unconsciously a brotherhood in daily action who, when the unforeseen overtook them, felt each and all, as brothers might, the same personal blow.

Reginald Smith, in harness to the last, died on December 26, 1916. He left no partner to carry on his work. It was resolved, therefore, to dispose of the business, but to leave the name of Smith, Elder where it had stood for a century, linked indissolubly with the personal representatives of the founder. In May 1917, John Murray acquired the business, which thus came to be absorbed by the very house from which, a hundred years earlier, George Smith of Elgin had set forth upon his career. With this change of habitation, moreover, the *Cornhill* suffered no breach of continuity. The lieutenant who had stood at the side of Reginald Smith for the past fifteen years, was privileged to carry on its traditions in Albemarle Street.



Z Huxley, Leonard
325 The house of Smith
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